

Flu bug circulating throughout Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

While there have been no deaths this season in the Lake Tahoe Basin from the flu, that is not the same case for bordering counties.

A woman in her 30s and a man in his 50s died last weekend in Sacramento County from the H1N1 flu strain. This is the same strain that gripped the country in 2009. On Friday, a 61-year-old woman was the first recorded flu death for Sac County.

This strain, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is predominately afflicting young and middle-age adults who are otherwise in good health.

Barton Health's PR department said four times the number of people are coming in with flu symptoms this year compared to a year ago, but no numbers were provided so it's hard to ascertain if this is a big deal.

"From what they have observed, the community clinic is much busier and they are seeing more cases of the flu. The flu cases they are seeing are more severe and more frequently in young, typically healthy adults," Molly Hucklebridge, Barton communications specialist, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to the CDC, for the last week of 2013, 20 states experienced high levels of influenza-like illness. Nevada was one of those states. Three people in Southern Nevada this season have died from the flu. California, to date, has had a minimal number of cases.

"Although H1N1 primarily affects children and young to middle-aged adults, it can affect anyone of any age. This year's flu

vaccine is designed to provide protection against H1N1, along with two or three other flu strains,” Margaret Williams with El Dorado County Health & Human Services told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It is not too late to be vaccinated. It costs \$10 through the Public Health Division. Call (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.

El Dorado County Public Health urges individuals to take the following actions to protect themselves and others from the flu:

- Get vaccinated against the flu annually. Minimum age is 6 months.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Sneeze or cough into your arm or a tissue; not your hand.
- Take flu antivirals if your doctor prescribes them.

Paul Rork, a physician with Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*, “As soon as you experience flu-like symptoms – which may include a high fever, muscle aches, sore throat, chills, fatigue, cough, and/or headache – visit a doctor immediately. If you see a doctor early, they can treat the flu with medication. If you find your symptoms getting worse after your flu symptoms have improved, you need to visit a doctor. You are at risk of contracting a secondary infection.”