

# Wind taking down trees, power lines in Tahoe



Mother Nature took a swipe Dec. 11 at St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

## **Uodated 8:25pm:**

There are 3,500 customers in the Sierra Tract area without power. Liberty Utilities has no idea when power will be restored.

**Updated 7:15pm:** The lines are in the air and power to the South Lake Tahoe-Meyers area should be restored any minute, according to Liberty Utilities. **By Kathryn Reed** A tree more than 200-feet tall fell onto St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe on Thursday morning. City building officials are testing the integrity of the structure. From the outside the Jeffery pine looks worse – having broken – and the roof barely dented considering the force that was thrust upon it. Church officials got a call from the fire alarm company at 11:37am Dec. 11. Caution tape is surrounding the church. “We’ve had

nothing to this extent before," the Rev. Ben DeLeon told *Lake Tahoe News* as he sat in the dark at Grace Hall. The frozen pipes 10 years ago don't compare to this. He sat looking a bit bewildered, knowing that Dec. 12 is one of the biggest services of the year – Lady of Guadalupe. With the number of trees falling everywhere in the Lake Tahoe Basin because of the high winds, the tree could not immediately be removed. The church was placed on a waiting list, though a company was expected out some time Dec. 11. A tree also took out three staff vehicles in the staff lot at South Tahoe High School. Lake Tahoe Unified let students out early on Thursday and has already canceled classes for Friday. At 5pm Dec. 11 Liberty Utilities said the outage in Woodfords and Markleeville caused by down lines will likely be out for six hours. Waves are so high on the lake that people have not been out surfing. Some reports are of 7-foot waves. Most of the South Shore is without power because the Meyers substation is out. This is causing 8,800 Liberty Utilities customers to be in the dark. Liberty provides power for the California side of the basin as well as Alpine County and Truckee. The main and back-up lines at Marshall Trail going to the Meyers substation went down, but the poles are standing. Crews are on the scene. The estimated time for power to return is by 7pm. South Lake Tahoe offices and Barton Memorial Hospital are operating on generators, as are all the Stateline casinos. The Flight Deck restaurant at the airport is doing a brisk business because the fryer is working and sandwiches don't require heat. Lights are on near the state line, with the Starbucks having a consistent line. NV Energy provides power on the Nevada side. Thousands of customers are still without power, with no estimated time of power to come back. "We try to get people back in service as quick as we can. It's like any other construction job; you never know what might come up," Karl Walquist with NV Energy told *Lake Tahoe News*. On the Nevada side, the biggest outage is on Kingsbury Grade, which is affecting 1,500 customers. In Glenbrook, 321 customers are without power; 145 in Zephyr Cove along Lakeview Drive and

Pharris Lane; and 45 on Winding Way between Zephyr Cove and Glenbrook. Carson City and Reno are also having trouble because of the weather. Winds in the basin were heavy throughout the night and have continued into Thursday morning, but calmed down by mid-afternoon. Rain started to fall on the South Shore about 10am. The winter storm warning is still in effect from 1pm today through 1pm Friday. Utility crews are expecting more power outages as the wind continues and rain turns to snow, especially because this is a warm storm so the snow will be heavy.