

Barton taking action to cut water use



Barton Heath in May started removing sod from many areas, including near the Alpine Building. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Hospitals use huge quantities of water – from old sterilizers operating 24 hours a day to non-aerated faucets to old toilets. And then there is landscaping.

According to the EPA, the median hospital uses 315 gallons of water per bed per day. Hospitals have historically been near the top for water consumption based on square footage at 55 gallons per square foot. Only senior care facilities and hotels ranked higher, according to the EPA.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental

Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency, and American Water Works Association put out a report titled "When Every Drop Counts: Protecting Public Health During Drought Conditions". It says, "Hospitals, clinics, and other health care facilities oftentimes rely heavily on water to ensure the well-being of their patients. Water is used for drinking, sanitation, patient care, equipment sterilization, HVAC systems, and other essential functions throughout these facilities."

Barton Memorial Hospital is no different than other entities when it comes to needing to use water for all of the above-mentioned reasons. However, the South Lake Tahoe medical facility is trying to curtail its usage as California deals with being in year four of a drought.

"Water plays an intricate part in our wellbeing which is why we, the staff and physicians at Barton Health, are doing our part to reduce our water usage and protect Tahoe's natural beauty. We value our residents, visitors, and wildlife, and want to be part of the solution to help alleviate our state's water crisis," Rich Belli, director of facilities, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Mulch was put down and native plants are growing where sod once was. Photo/Provided

In 2014, Barton cut its water usage by more than 28 percent compared to the previous year.

Actions taken this year include:

- Replacing remaining standard toilets with low flow toilets at all Barton Health facilities.
- Decreasing sprinkler usage and working with South Tahoe Public Utility District's turf buyback program to remove 8,000 square feet of lawn in various areas throughout the hospital campus and replace it with drought tolerant landscape.
- Turning off outside water features.
- Minimizing use of bottled water by serving pitchers of water at catering events and to patients unless medically necessary.