

# Placer County recovering from storm damage

By Michael Rohm

The first thing Harold Slear saw when he walked through the main entrance of Boatworks Mall in Tahoe City just before noon Jan. 8 was merchants pulling inventory from their waterlogged stores.

The owner of James-Harold Galleries, Slear was late for work because he had needed to clear his driveway of the snow that had been falling heavily all night and into the morning. That same precipitation was now responsible for disorder on a greater scale.

"I came in and saw that it was literally raining from the ceiling," he told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Slear walked first to the nearby 1960 Winter Games and Sierra Ski Museum. When he saw the extent of the damage he called his friend David Antonucci. "I think you're going to want to see this," he told him.

The flat roof at Boatworks Mall had already accumulated 3 feet of snow. When the heavy rain hit that weekend, an additional foot of precipitation augmented the snowpack and swelled above the exhaust ducts in the roof. There was nowhere for the water to go but down the ducts and into the building. The stores beneath these ducts, including the Sierra Ski Museum, were in the direct path of the water.

Despite his meticulous preservation of artifacts, Sierra Ski Museum co-founder David Antonucci, was worried as he drove to the mall. The damage that Slear had described on the phone was unprecedented. Dripping ceiling. Ruined walls. Standing water.



Heaters and blowers work to dry out the ski museum in Tahoe City. Photo/David Antonucci

“This museum is probably the best collection of artifacts from the 1960 Winter Olympics,” Antonucci told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s really one of kind.”

When he arrived, Antonucci was relieved to find that his security measures had paid off. The glass cases surrounding the artifacts had kept everything dry.

“It’s really amazing that nothing was damaged,” he said.

Other shops were not as fortunate. According to Antonucci, Geared for Games and Tahoe Shoe & Clothing Co., two stores directly below his museum, were “a complete loss.”

No one from either store could be reached for comment.

In the days following the damage, Channel Properties, the real estate agency that owns Boatworks Mall, began remediation and repair. When the company hired to do the job proved too small for the extensive damage, Channel brought in BELFOR, the

largest restoration contractor in the world.

“We got called in because we had the resources to handle it,” said Mark Malcuit, project manager and estimator for BELFOR. “We came in with a large crew to start removing wet material and to dry out the building.”

Since then, the 16-person crew with dehumidifiers have worked around the clock to get the damaged stores back in business. “We’ve finished with demolition and the mall is just about dry,” Malcuit said. “Within another month or so we should have everything put back together.”

The atmospheric river that overwhelmed the drainage system at Boatworks Mall has wreaked havoc throughout all of Lake Tahoe. Placer County eventually declared a local emergency because of the exact conditions that had impacted Boatworks Mall and several other local businesses. The county estimates the financial damage to local infrastructure is as high as \$8 million.

DeDe Cordell, director of communications and public affairs for Placer County, urges small business owners to report any property damage.

“We’re trying to get folks to reach out to make sure we’re connected and tracking damages for local business,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*. “If we’re able to get federal assistance, the small business administration can offer assistance.”

Small business owners affected by the storms may contact Placer County Economic Development Director Sherri Conway at 530.889.4096 or go **online** for more information.