

Danger in Sierra: 50 closed until Sat., slides, floods



Flooding remains an issue throughout many parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Updated 10:07pm:

Power is off for thousands of people in the Lake Tahoe Basin and Carson Valley areas.

“Road closures from flooding are hampering our crews’ efforts to get to the remaining outages in the Carson/Genoa/Gardnerville area,” NV Energy says on its website.

In the Kingsbury Grade area of Stateline there are four outages affecting 2,356 customers. The weather has caused poles and wires to come down. Crews are hoping power is restored by midnight.

There are 141 Liberty Utilities customers without power in the El Dorado County portion of the basin, while 93 Placer County customers are in the dark.

Travelers trying to reach Lake Tahoe are creating problems for law enforcement because they are blindly following what their GPS says.

“This has led to numerous parties getting stuck on roads that are closed during the winter, and in the end, tie up valuable resources rescuing them from deep snow or impassable roads,” El Dorado County sheriff’s deputies said in a statement. “In the winter, the only safe alternate route when Highway 50 is closed is to use Highway 88 to the south, or Interstate 80 to the North. If you are using any other road that you are not absolutely familiar with and you see snow on the roadway, or the road turns to dirt; stop, turn around, and go back to main roadway.”

Updated 8pm:

A mudslide has closed Highway 50 between Meyers and Placerville. It is not expected to open until Saturday.

The Carson Spur is now open.

The long route to Tahoe on Friday night is via Highway 20 to Interstate 80. Travelers tell *Lake Tahoe News* this route is extremely congested.

There was a second avalanche Friday afternoon in the Crystal Bay subdivision near east Tuscarora Road.

First responders and public safety personnel are monitoring and assessing the situation.

Residents in the Crystal Bay area should exercise caution if accessing the slopes above their homes.



South Lake Tahoe crews on Feb. 10 unclog drains in the city. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Updated 4:23pm:

Because of avalanche activity this morning in the Crystal Bay subdivision near east Tuscarora Road, residents are being asked to avoid outdoor activity and to shelter in place until further notice.

Incline Village residents woke up to more than 2 feet of snow Friday morning.

Sierra Avalanche Center said the danger level is considerable.

Interstate 80 is closed at Colfax because of a significant mudslide. Traffic is being diverted to Highway 20, though trucks are not allowed there.

“The soil is so saturated it can’t take anymore water. Something has to give,” Caltrans spokesman Steve Nelson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Trees as tall as 100 feet came down in the slide.

Some have questioned whether all of Caltrans' thinning of trees last year made the slopes unstable. Nelson said that wasn't the case with this slide.

Traffic has been moving intermittently between Meyers and Placerville because of slides.

On Feb. 10 the Douglas County Board of Commissioners declared a state of emergency due to a flood and wind event that took place over the last couple of days.



It's hard to find the docks and the water with the snow and slush in the Tahoe Keys. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

A flood warning for the greater Lake Tahoe area remains in effect until 9am Friday, with the winter storm warning going through Saturday at 1am.

The Upper Truckee River crested to 12.41 feet at about 4:40am Feb. 10.

"We are firmly in second for all time crest. Only the 1997

flood was higher," Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe assistant public works director, told *Lake Tahoe News*. In 1997 the river reached about 13.41 feet. "It will take days for the water to recede."

Sander plows and loaders are on the streets to deal with flooding issues. No new flooding in South Lake Tahoe has been reported overnight, with the same areas **reported on Thursday** being an issue.

Pot holes will be addressed as soon as possible, Marino said.

While snow is generally better than rain in the Sierra, the temps are still on the high side so much of the snow is melting as it hits the ground. This is making roads slushy and means drains are clogging. This in turn leads to more flooding.

In El Dorado County:

- Arapahoe Street is closed between San Diego Street and Country Club Drive due to a sink hole caused by a failed culvert.
- Elks Club Drive is closed between Highway 50 and Waverly Drive. A culvert has failed.
- Most of Waverly Drive is closed due to the condition of the road.

Snow levels are expected to drop this afternoon and evening. According to the National Weather Service in Reno, there could be 2 to 5 inches of snow by Friday night at lake level.

Truckee Tahoe Unified and Carson City schools are closed for Feb. 10. All Washoe County are on a two-hour delay Friday. Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village is starting classes at 10am.

A flood warning continues for the Carson River near Carson City, from Friday morning to Saturday afternoon. The highest

risk of flooding is in urban areas and along creeks and streams leading out of the Carson Range. The river is expected to hit the major flood stage late tonight or early Saturday.

Water is moving onto Highway 395 with the Cradlebaugh bridge expected to close. An alternate route to northbound Highway 395 is Fairview to Foothill to Jacks Valley Road.

Voluntary evacuations of the Aspen Mobile Home Park and Kingslane Mobile Home Park occurred late Thursday evening and Friday morning. The Community and Senior Center has been set up as a shelter and is taking evacuees and their pets.

Flooding and downed power lines have Mottsville, Centerville, Muller and Genoa Lanes in Gardnerville closed.

There is no estimated time when Highway 89 around Emerald Bay or Highway 50 near Logan Creek will open to allow traffic between the South Shore and Carson City via Spooner Summit.

Other highways leading into and out of the Tahoe basin are open, some with restrictions. Current highway information may be found by clicking on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

This is a warning from the Weather Service: "Each year, more deaths occur due to flooding than from any other hazard. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that over half of all flood-related drownings occur when a vehicle is driven into hazardous flood water. The next highest percentage of flood-related deaths is due to walking into or near flood waters."