

SLTFD back on the waters of Lake Tahoe



Ms. Lisa, the South Lake Tahoe fire boat, will be christened April 2 at 1:30pm at Tahoe Keys Marina. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Lives are expected to be saved. Structures might be as well, but the primary purpose of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department's new vessel is to be a rescue boat.

Advanced life support will be able to be administered on the water. In the past only basic first aid was rendered.

The boat is the difference. The old one, which beavers destroyed, was an inflatable. This new one is more stable, larger and will allow IVs to be administered, bleeding to be stopped and splinting among other medical care.

Lakeside Marina is likely to be its permanent home. From there it can reach Emerald Bay in eight minutes.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board passed an amendment in September 2016 allowing for one public safety pier in each county. South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston is a proponent of this. He would like to see lifts at the piers so boats can stay in the water year round. This will allow for aid to be rendered that much faster.

“There have been some conversations between TRPA, Tahoe Douglas Fire, and Douglas County sheriff about ideas for a new pier, but no applications submitted at this point,” Tom Lotshaw with the bi-state regulatory agency told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The SLTFD vessel is a SAFE Boat, the same type the Coast Guard uses. It’s near impossible to tip over, and will be able to handle Lake Tahoe when it resembles the ocean.

Infrared gear will allow first responders to find people in the water. Night vision is also a component.

A medic will be on board. The nine fire engineers are being trained in navigation and how to handle the boat. Firefighters are going through training from the state Division of Boating and Waterways as well as the U.S. Coast Guard.

“The boat has played a pretty important role in our delivery system,” Meston told *Lake Tahoe News*. The agency has been without its own boat for three years.

Meston cited how on Fourth of July boaters – motorized and non – get turned around after the fireworks, drownings are an annual occurrence, and freak accidents like tourist vessels getting stuck on sandbars where passengers need rescuing are all calls his team responds to.

This boat also has better firefighting capabilities than the previous one. When a hose was used on the old boat it pushed the vessel away from the flames. This vessel will be strong enough not to move.

This new boat was completely funded with a \$390,000 donation by philanthropist Lisa Maloff.

“The reality is this boat will save someone’s life. She will have directly contributed to saving someone’s life,” Meston said of Maloff.

Maloff is expected to be at today’s christening of the boat named after her – Ms. Lisa – a bit of a play on words with boats often having MS (motor ship) before the name. This was her choosing.