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Self-serve sandbag station at corner of Mt Diablo Boulevard at Village Center Drive in Lafayette



Buried storm drain inlet flooded roadway at Bollinger Canyon Road



Public Works Director Mike Moran inspects segment of storm damaged shoulder of St Mary's Road near Driftwood Drive

Lafayette: photos courtesy city of Lafayette; Moraga: photos courtesy Moraga Public Works Department; Orinda: photos Sora O'Doherty



San Pablo Creek behind the Orinda Post Office rose above its banks during the height of the winter storms in early January.



Landslides - Painted Rock debris fell onto Rheem Boulevard

Lamorinda suffers storm damage, but dodges major devastation

By Sora O'Doherty, Vera Kochan, Jennifer Wake

Heavy showers of rain and strong winds created problems in Lamorinda in the first weeks of 2023. Fortunately, the area did not suffer from the extreme damage, including fatalities, experienced elsewhere in California. However, the area did experience landslides both on private and public property as well as downed trees and power lines, and all three jurisdictions declared a state of emergency.

The city of Lafayette proclaimed a local state of emergency on Jan. 4. "This allows us greater flexibility to contract for work, document damage, and ask for reimbursement from the federal government should funds become available," City Manager Niroop Srivatsa explained at the Jan. 9 council meeting. As of Friday, Jan. 6 Lafayette had distributed over 6,000 sand bags, Orinda handed out 8,000 sand bags and 60 tons of sand as of Jan. 10, and Moraga also distributed a large number of sand bags.

"Diamond K opened their doors on New Year's Day and really helped the public," Srivatsa said at the council meeting, noting that the city staffed two sand bag stations, which have been replenished every day.

There were mud slides and debris flows at Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road, a slide in the upper baseball field at Community Park, the Lafayette Community Center had some leaks in the roof, there was a failed drain pipe at the creek at Victoria Court, potholes required repair throughout Lafayette, and a storm drain at Orchard Road caused some flooding. A slide below St. Mary's Road along Las Trampas Creek (the west side of the road approximately 310 feet south of Driftwood Drive) put the structural integrity of St. Mary's Road at risk. Staff had a contractor place some rip rap at the base of the slide and up into the scarp as an interim stabilization measure and the council released \$50,000 from the Emergency Response Fund 011-360.861 to complete this work. "Crews are working around the clock, working weekends as well," Srivatsa said. "Thanks to everyone for pitching in and helping out."

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Lafayette Reservoir Tower Seismic Retrofit Project could change look of iconic structure

By Lou Fancher

Residents, visitors and people who enjoy outdoor recreation in Lafayette will want to take advantage of available opportunities to speak out about changes coming to what is arguably the city's most iconic symbol.

At the city council's Jan. 9 meeting, officials of the East Bay Municipal Utility District presented an update on the long-planned Lafayette Reservoir Tower Seismic Retrofit Project. While posing no imminent threat to Lafayette residents living along Lafayette Creek downstream of the reservoir, studies and evaluations performed in 2005 indicated the tower is highly vulnerable during a large earthquake and a retrofit is required. Roughly 1.5 million people visit the reservoir each year.

Photo courtesy EBMUD

Rendering of Lafayette Reservoir tower would involve removal of the "house" at the tower's top and shortening the structure by approximately 40 feet.

To help the council and members of the public understand the project's origin, scope and purpose, EBMUD Engineering Manager Elizabeth Bialek walked through Lafayette reservoir, dam, and tower history.

Constructed in 1927, the reservoir is not part of the district's water supply and is intended for use only as an emergency water source. The Lafayette dam is one of 25 managed and operated by EBMUD and falls under the oversight of the state's Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD). At 170 feet tall, the tower is 40 feet higher than necessary, a fact that resulted when the foundation of the original dam settled and a quick redesign lowered the dam 33 feet, but left tower plans unchanged. The 2005 studies showed the tower's extended, above-water height, if left unaddressed and subject to forces from a large earthquake, could suffer damage or complete structural failure due to high bending in the rebar embedded in the concrete walls of the tower.

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