

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #60



EL NIÑO WEATHER WATCH

Part 5: City Of Monterey Launches New Storm Center Website

By Wanda Sue Parrott

(Weather forecasts predict the Monterey Peninsula will be hard hit by El Niño conditions this winter, with potential flooding and frigid temperatures that could be deadly for unsheltered persons. What is being done to provide shelter and service if dire predictions materialize? This series explores foul-weather aid for everyone.)

Preparing For The Worst, Hoping For The Best

MONTEREY'S new emergency Storm Center website has been up and running 24/7 since last week and will be upgraded as information changes.

Because no one or anything is exempt from storms predicted to hit the Central California coastline within the next few weeks, preparedness is vital regardless of weather severity or whether you are houseless, a homeowner or somewhere in between. Be philosophical: Hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

According to the Storm Center website: "When a major emergency happens within city limits, the City of Monterey will likely open its Emergency Operations Center.

The EOC is located in a secure facility where City departments can work closely together to coordinate the emergency response, allocate resources, and support management of the incident.

If the EOC is activated, the latest information on the situation will be posted on the City website at www.monterey.org as soon as it is available.

The City will also use the media, Alert! Monterey County, Twitter and other methods to get information out quickly to the public.

Certified Emergency Response Team (CERT) Stations

According to Monterey's assistant city manager Hans Uslar, who responded to our recent questionnaire, also answered by Pacific Grove's mayor Bill Kampe, there are 10 Certified Emergency Response Team (CERT) Containers located throughout the city of Monterey (see sidebar for list of locations).

He says, “Throughout our City we have deployed 20-foot large containers which we call CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) boxes. They contain emergency supplies, tools, batteries, lights, etc. They are used/staffed by Monterey’s CERT team.”

CERT’s website states: The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations.”

Website for CERT is <http://montereycert.org/>.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Uslar explains, “Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help.”

Volunteers receive 24 hours of training over two weekends.

Uslar adds, “The CERTs will be a primary resource for our city in time of emergencies...Our Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) program paid for the containers; our neighbors are responsible for stocking and equipping them.”

A NIP project is any public improvement (not on private property) that improves streets, storm drains, sewers, sidewalks, walkways, lighting, traffic control devices, landscaping and beautification, parks, recreational facilities and other public building improvements.

For further information about CERT, call 831-646-3416 or e-mail montereycert@hotmail.com.

Bad Weather: An Equal Opportunity Destroyer

Torrential downpours that cause floods do not discriminate between brush-and-debris shelters at the foot of a hill and elegant homes high above them. Flood and mud can destroy them both.

Both homeless and homeowners/renters are advised by the City of Monterey to “make a plan, make a kit, be informed.” In essence, know where you can go for help before the need arises to go there.

Making Your Plan

Hans Uslar says about Monterey’s multitude of options to provide care and shelter during a large scale emergency operation, “One of our key assets is the Sport Center, which can be used as an emergency care shelter.”

“However, during time of need and emergencies our Community Centers will be also used as Temporary Assistance Centers. We presently operate four Community Centers All centers are equipped with various levels of emergency power ranging from small mobile units to a large-scale fixed generator in the Casanova Oak Knoll Park Center.

“The Red Cross will be the agency calling the shots in identifying additional shelters throughout our City. These can include assets owned by Monterey Peninsula School District (schools) and County (Fairgrounds).”

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) will also be involved with rescue and care of homeless pets.

Addresses and emergency contact information for Monterey:

- North Monterey: Casanova Oak Knoll Park Center—735 Ramona Ave., Monterey, 831- 646-5665
- South (Lower New) Monterey: Scholze Community Center—280 Dickman Ave., New Monterey, 831-646- 3878
- East (Upper New) Monterey: Hilltop Park Center—871 Jessie St., Monterey, 831-646-3975

- West (Central) Monterey: Monterey Sports Center—301 E. Franklin St., Monterey, 831-646-3730
Monterey Youth Center—777 Pearl St., Monterey, 831-646-3873
- Areawide: Red Cross (Monterey Branch)—550 Lighthouse Ave., Monterey, 831-375-5730 SPCA,
1002 Monterey-Salinas Highway, Salinas, 831-373-2631.

Other Emergency Information

According to Hans Uslar, “Our emergency radio station at 1610 AM will broadcast where we have emergency shelters, who to contact and provide also regular updates.”

He says that — like Pacific Grove— Monterey has created a fund for economic uncertainty. “These funds will be typically used to restore/rebuild city infrastructure and not private homes. Presently we have around \$9 million in this fund, but, again, these funds are meant to help the City to recover from a major disaster and to allow rebuilding of City owned infrastructure.”

Monterey’s emergency center operations are overseen by City Manager Michael McCarthy. Website of the new Monterey Storm Center is www.monterey.org/stormcenter.

“The shelters will be left opened on an as-needed basis,” Uslar concludes.

“We also will have all the supplies which Mayor Kampe mentions, plus hot chocolate and hot cider 😊.”

(Next week: Seaside’s storm report with 72-hour survival kit instructions.)

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