

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

December 11, 2015

Column #61



EL NIÑO WEATHER WATCH

Part 6: Power Outage Helps City Of Seaside Prepare For Flooding 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.)

Seaside's Sunday Shake-Up Call

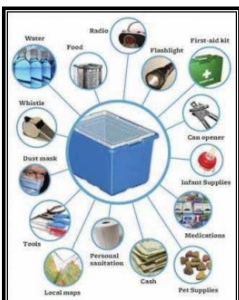
ON SUN., OCT. 18, a power outage shut down the Monterey Peninsula at around 7 a.m. By noon, most businesses had closed, stop lights failed, computers crashed, cell phones and radios went silent, and healthcare facilities operated on emergency generators.

Instead of panicking, as many people did, Seaside wisely converted the potential liability into an asset by using it as a learning experience about what needs to be fixed or acquired before the long-predicted catastrophic rainfalls of El Nino come to town.

Thus, Seaside was weeks ahead of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), whose federal guidelines for disaster preparedness appear elsewhere in this edition of Cedar Street Times.

Seaside's recommended emergency kit and other disaster-related advice appear on the city's website. Recommended to be stored in a plastic container are: can opener, cash, dust mask, First Aid kit, flashlight, food, infant supplies, maps (local), medications, personal sanitation supplies, pet supplies, radio, tools, water, whistle.

Beyond A Hitch In Their Gitalongs



In the dark of the power-outage night, many people ate sandwiches by candlelight while others went to bed early since TV was off the agenda and they didn't know what to do with themselves during blank time. Some feared terrorists were invading Paradise. Or that El Niño had arrived without rain.

Least-disturbed by the power outage caused by a generator failure at the PG&E plant in Moss Landing were homeless persons living on the beach, in tents, or brush-and-debris shelters in encampments throughout the peninsula. They are used to survival sans most amenities.

A sigh of relief shuddered like soft barking of seals across the peninsula when lights flickered back to life around midnight. Most of the 55,000 residents afflicted by the power outage went forth as if the event had been a mere glitch in their gitalongs. Not so in Seaside.

On Nov. 19, Fire Chief Brian Dempsey told Seaside City Council the municipal power outage had been “a great opportunity to see where the gaps may be.” Among things found to need fixing or replacement was a Fire Dept. generator installed back in 1978 that needed refueling every five hours and “some medical needs” for which the purchase of four small generators was recommended.



His report included the need for, among other things: a key to get into the system for fuel pump Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) “so that everybody knows how to operate it,” a better way to communicate than with cell phones alone, and additional rain gear for the Fire Dept. because “there is a very good possibility that if we get inundated with rain, a power outage will happen.”

Emergency Partnering Plans

Fire Chief Dempsey told *Cedar Street Times*, “We are currently working with our partners with CSUMB and the City of Marina in a regional Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) to support operations in a declared disaster.”

The Seaside Fire Dept. also services Del Rey Oaks, while Sand City contracts with the Monterey Fire Dept.

How To Prepare For A Flood

These tips and other helpful advice appear on Seaside’s Emergency Services website at <http://ci.seaside.ca.us/index.aspx?page=445>.

Turn Around. Don’t Drown!

Avoid walking or driving through flood waters.

Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down, and 2 feet of water can sweep your vehicle away.

If there is a chance of flash flooding, move immediately to higher ground. Flash floods are the #1 cause of weather-related deaths in the US.

If floodwaters rise around your car but the water is not moving, abandon the car and move to higher ground. Do not leave the car and enter moving water.

Avoid camping or parking along streams, rivers, and creeks during heavy rainfall. These areas can flood quickly and with little warning.



Emergency Shelters For The Homeless And Others

Seaside’s Emergency Manager is David Nava, Battalion Chief with Seaside Fire Dept. Nava says Seaside’s \$6,100 budget for Emergency Services goes for supplies, training operations and public education. “We also pay \$5000 annually for the regional ECC.”

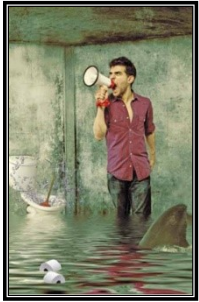
If a disaster is declared, state and federal relief is then considered for acquisition.

“Currently, as in the past, the City follows the County’s plan for sheltering through our partners with the Salvation Army,” Nava says. “They offer shelter services during the winter in Salinas and pick up homeless persons on Del Monte Blvd. in the City of Monterey every evening to transport to their shelter in Salinas.”

“In the event we are experiencing an event that would declare a disaster by our City Disaster Council, we would begin Emergency Operations and stand up a shelter within the City utilizing our partners with Red Cross.” Others involved in administering services will be county, city and organizational staff deemed necessary in the disaster declaration.

A flood preparedness and sheltering drill was held Dec. 3 at the Oldemeyer Center with the Red Cross to determine whether more than 50 beds will be needed if El Niño hits hard.

Nava says such shelter would be available “for all citizens in the City of Seaside, Del Rey Oaks along with neighboring jurisdictions in a declared disaster event.” They will be located at:



Oldemeyer Center, 986 Hilby Ave., Seaside

Boys & Girls Club, 1284 La Salle Ave.

Seaside Seaside High School, 2200 Noche Buena St., Seaside

Seaside’s positive approach to the power outage put the city weeks ahead of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), whose guidelines for disaster preparedness will appear in a later edition of *Cedar Street Times*. Way to go, Seaside!

Contact Seaside Fire Dept., 1635 Broadway Ave., Seaside, Ca. 93955, 831-899-6790. bdempsey@ci.seaside.ca.us and dnav@ci.seaside.ca.us.

(Next week: Red Cross wrap-up for shelters not already covered by this series.)

###

Photos and clipart from Google online images; used for educational/illustrative purposes only; no copyright infringement intended.

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or leave a message at The Yodel Lady at 831-899-5887.