

Being Proactive About Flood Protection



The nation has learned the critical importance of levee systems to flood protection. As a city surrounded by levees, West Sacramento was the beneficiary of a major levee construction project in the late 1990s—the \$31 million West Sacramento Project, in which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers raised and strengthened five miles of existing levees. Construction concentrated on the city’s western boundary, improving levee sections that had been identified in earlier studies. Not only did the project take the levees to new heights, but it also went deep below the surface—with the construction of slurry wall barriers, 40- to 60-foot deep along identified levee segments, to minimize water leakage at the base of the levees.

Unlike neighboring areas that are located in hundred year flood plains, West Sacramento’s level of flood protection is regarded as one of the strongest. In 1999, the Army Corps’ Lt. Col. Michael Walsh expected the levee improvements to provide West Sacramento, “the highest level of flood protection of any California city protected by levees.” Companies like Affymetrix, California Casualty, and Level III have located within the city, based in part on superior flood protection.

Despite this level of protection, the city remains vigilant. Prior to each storm season, meetings are convened by the city with agencies responsible for maintenance and monitoring of the levees surrounding West Sacramento—Reclamation Districts 900 and 537 and the California Department of Water Resources. Also participating are key city emergency responders: police, fire, and public works. The meetings discuss levee conditions, maintenance activities and expectations for the storm season (for which the 2006 forecast is normal), in addition to reviewing the inventory of flood preparedness resources.

“The city has always been keenly aware of its reliance on levees,” said City Engineer Caroline Quinn. “While concerns have risen in the region recently, the city has always worked closely with the reclamation districts.”

In fact, the city is one of a minority of agencies in the state that have formalized coordination of its emergency preparedness and response through a cooperative agreement with the local reclamation districts whose legal responsibility to inspect levees includes monitoring water levels and soil conditions. “Levees are constantly subject to changing conditions,” explained Quinn. “Weather and activities such as people walking on levee slopes cause erosion over time and it is important to constantly monitor levee conditions.”

The city’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is also ready to respond to flood dangers. The facility is the nerve center for directing personnel and resources in an emergency. Occupying the center are members of the city organization who are trained to fulfill specific functions, such as operations, planning or logistics. The center is also connected to a support system that includes Yolo County, the Sacramento region and the state. When West Sacramento was hit by heavy storms in early 1998, the city used area contacts to line up delivery of 6,000 sandbags in short order.

When surrounding waters reach threatening levels, the city is guided by its slow rise flood plan. It describes a series of stages, in which specific actions are taken as waters rise. It identifies when the EOC should open, how emergency information will be disseminated, and when evacuations are necessary. A copy of the plan is on the city’s Web site www.cityofwestsacramento.org.

Coming in January: The City’s First Off-Leash Dog Play Area

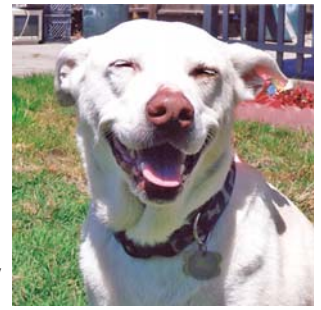


Photo:
Carol Pollard

To meet a community need, the city is establishing its first off-leash dog play area in January—centrally-located at Sam Combs Park, Jefferson and Stone boulevards. Dogs can be set free to run inside a fenced-in area, separate from the picnic and tot lot areas. Check for signs posting rules for use of the dog play area. And please, no more trips to playgrounds and ballfields. Additional dog play areas will be developed by the city.

New Parks Getting Ready for Spring Openings

Residents can look forward to a series of new parks opening this spring—adding to the city’s existing total of 24 parks.

- **Patwin Park** (4.5 acres), 3080 Catalina Island Rd., between Santa Barbara and Ryer Island streets. The park will feature picnic and turf play areas, along with a jogging path.
- **Classics Minipark** 3732 Oakland Bay Dr., between Oakland Bay, Graham Island, and Galiano Island roads. The minipark will have two picnic tables and benches.
- **Bridgeway Lakes Community Park** (12 acres), 3650 Southport Parkway (at Bridgeway Lakes Drive). Scheduled to open in April, the park will contain a turf area, baseball diamond, amphitheater and community building, in addition to providing water recreation.

For information about upcoming park openings, contact Parks Planner Dave Shpak, (916) 617-4645.

“This is Only a Drill” ...



Members of the West Sacramento Fire Department respond to simulated explosion adjacent to the Tower Bridge, as part of the state’s Homeland Security “Golden Guardian 2005” exercise. On Nov. 15, city fire and police personnel were among 2,000 Northern California public safety responders reacting to simultaneous terrorist incidents staged at the Tower Bridge, the Roseville railyards and the Port of Oakland. The event tested communication levels and cooperation between 160 state and local agencies in managing emergency resources. Though the scenario was prodded by acts of terrorism, the drill served as valuable preparation for response to natural disasters, as well.