

RESOURCE

MANAGING COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE

El Niño...What Should We Do to Prepare?

We are well into the rainy season but it's never too late to prepare for major storm events. In anticipation of the heavily publicized El Niño, the City has gone through extensive preparation making sure public highways, streets, bridges, storm drains, and public buildings have been maintained and are ready. As a property owner or tenant, consider taking some additional steps to help keep your family and property safe:

- Fix your leaks.
- Clean out gutters and downspouts.
- Make sure your yard drains properly to prevent unwanted pooling.
- Turn off automatic sprinklers.
- Loosen compacted soil to help aid water absorption.
- Secure items such as fences, furniture, and plants.
- Have materials on hand to divert water.

In case of flooding in the area, always remember to keep your car fueled and know safe routes - by car and by foot - from your office or home to high, safe ground. Take the time to place important documents on a thumb drive or in the cloud and put together an emergency supply kit to have on hand, just in case.

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In a Flood Zone? Take it a Step Further

Four major streams and numerous minor waterways cause flooding in San Luis Obispo. If you are located within one of these areas, you should take some additional steps to prepare. This includes purchasing flood insurance, making sure drainage channels are free of obstruction and debris, and protecting your property from the hazards of flooding. If you aren't sure whether your property is located within a known floodzone, there is an interactive flood zone map as well as a winter weather guide on the City's website at slocity.org/publicworks. If you are unable to view it, give us a call at 781-7201 or drop by 919 Palm Street and ask for the City Engineering Division.

EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT CHECKLIST

- First aid kit and any necessary prescription medicines (be sure to check expiration dates).
- Food (canned, dried or food that doesn't need to be refrigerated), plus food for those with special diets; pet food.
- Hand-operated can opener.
- Drinking water - plan on one gallon of water per person per day for three days, minimum.
- Portable radio, flashlights and extra batteries (candles are not recommended).
- Cash.



The Importance of Fire Hydrants



Even though they may appear insignificant, fire hydrants are one of the most important pieces of the City's water distribution system. Hydrants allow firefighters quick and easy access to a large flow of water and they are responsible for saving countless lives and billions of dollars in property loss nationwide. Without them, public health and safety is at risk making these humble pieces of equipment deserving of greater appreciation.

Prior to the invention of the hydrant, municipal fire readiness involved underground water cisterns and bucket brigades. Early pressurized citywide water systems were comprised of wooden pipes. When a blaze broke out, firefighters dug down to break through the wooden water main. Once the fire was quenched, the hole in the water main was then filled with a "fire plug."

Fire hydrants were invented in the 1800s and have evolved in design and function. The City has over 2,000 hydrants including some still in use from the 1950s. The Utilities Department is responsible for the maintenance and replacement of hydrants and is systematically replacing the older ones based on age, condition, and functionality.

Food Waste Recycling is on its Way

After years of research, a comprehensive organics diversion program was established and adopted by City Council in August 2015. The program will collect and compost residential and commercial food and green waste. It will be implemented in phases with the first phase scheduled to kick-off in early 2016.

Residential customers will be able to place food waste in their green waste container. Per state law, larger commercial customers (mainly school cafeterias and large restaurants), will be part of the first phase and will be supplied with a separate container for their materials. Additional commercial customers will be added to the program in subsequent years. The ultimate goal is to divert all of the City's organic waste from the landfill and recycle it back into the environment. More information about this program will be coming soon.

With the Rain Comes Water Quality Concerns



With the rainy season upon us, it's time to think about the simple things we can do to reduce the amount of pollutants that will flow into storm drains. Everything that is dumped or dropped on the ground or in a gutter contributes to water pollution. Here's what you can do to help:

- **Clean up your pet's waste.**
- **Use environmentally friendly cleaning products and fertilizers.**
- **Turn off your sprinklers to eliminate the potential for overspray.**
- **Dispose of your motor oil and household chemicals properly.**
- **Keep trash and recycling containers covered to prevent the materials from blowing out of the cans.**

For more information, visit slowater.org

Maximizing Recycled Water



The City Water Resource Recovery Facility is going through a major modernization project to match the City's goals of meeting regulatory requirements, providing educational opportunities, and achieving long term sustainable environmental practices. One of the key guiding principles to the project is maximizing the beneficial use of the high-quality water that is the end product of the treatment process.

The City is embarking on a study to develop and evaluate alternative uses of recycled water. Data gathered will be used to make informed decisions about the future of the recycled water program. The study is partially funded by a grant and is anticipated to be completed in June 2016.

New Sewer Cap Period Has Begun

It's that time again – the period for establishing your sewer cap for 2016-17 started on December 3, 2015. Your sewer cap is established annually by averaging the number of units of water your household uses during December, January, and February when your outdoor irrigation should be at a minimum. Turn your irrigation down or off during the sewer cap period to save money on your sewer charges all year long. The new sewer cap becomes effective July 1.

For more information, go to slowater.org or call 781-7133.

Landscaping for the Future

The community has been suffering through severe drought conditions for the last four years. With watering restrictions and the resulting need to reduce or eliminate outdoor irrigation, many landscapes have either died or are in poor condition. Luckily, resources are available to turn this perceived negative into a positive!

An interactive website, slowaterwiselandscaping.com, is available to help residents design a beautiful drought-tolerant landscape.

The website has tools that allow users to browse hundreds of beautiful landscape photos and zoom in on a selected plant. Detailed plant photos and plant information are displayed, enabling users to select and print a customized plant list. The site also provides additional tips on landscape design, soil preparation, planting, efficient irrigation techniques, and watering guides for the county's different climate zones. A video tutorial even shows people how to use the website.





Utilities Department
 879 Morro Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

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Drought Update: It's Not Over Until It's Over

How much rain will we receive this year? Forecasts have been optimistic but as this edition of the Resource is being written, rainfall is tracking closer to normal. Predictions have said that the months of January, February and March should be when we see the most significant amounts of rain. Regardless of the amount of rain received this season, we have a long road ahead to reach a full recovery for our three surface water reservoirs. It is important for the community to remember that the drought emergency declared by the City Council back in June 2015 and all water waste and outdoor watering regulations remain in effect.

The community has responded to the call to conserve above and beyond what was asked for back in June. The state's mandated water reduction requirement is a cumulative 12% between June and the end of February. However, citizens and businesses together have reduced a whopping cumulative 22% through November. Because of the conservation effort, the City's water supply remains stable with about 3.5 years of water available if the water saving efforts continue.

For the most up to date drought information, go to slowater.org/drought or call 781-7215.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Water & Sewer Problems
 8 AM to 5 PM
 (805) 781-7220

After Hours & Weekends
 (805) 781-7312

How Do I Report Water Waste

To report water waste, go to slowater.org, click on "Current Drought Information" and you will see a tab for "Report Water Waste."
You can also leave a message on the Drought Hotline by calling 783-7776.

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