

FLOOD PREPAREDNESS WINTER 2004 - 2005

The rainy season is upon us and the City of Petaluma would like to remind residents and property owners of the flood hazards posed by the Petaluma River and its tributaries and suggest ways to protect both people and property.

FLOODING IN PETALUMA-The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Petaluma have completed a majority of the Petaluma River Flood Control Project. The project was designed to provide protection to the Payran Area from the 100-year flood.

As you may be aware, the Petaluma River and its tributaries have a history of flooding during severe storms. The City incurred major damage during floods in 1982, 1983, 1986, 1992, 1995 and 1998. During the worst of these storms, some homes in the Payran Area had as much as five feet of water in them. It is important to be aware of this potential danger and to properly prepare for it.

FLOOD SAFETY -To help protect its citizens, particularly those in the most flood prone areas, the City has developed and continues to update its Flood Alert System. Through this system, our Police and Fire Departments will attempt to give areas at risk as much warning time as possible. The Flood Alert System is a computer system, which was installed in 1984 to monitor weather conditions and record stream heights and precipitation. The Water Resources and Conservation Department and the Fire Department monitor this system. During inclement weather the information on the computer can model the event to help determine the height of the water and the approximate time duration. This information allows emergency managers to coordinate resources and/or evacuations as needed from the Emergency Operations Center. If public safety personnel deem it necessary, notification to evacuate will be given. Residents will be advised to move to a safe area before access is cut off by floodwaters. Please remember, we have limited resources and during inclement weather we are being summoned to assist in numerous other areas of the City. We strongly suggest you take the time to formulate a family evacuation plan. In a flood emergency, the following precautions should be taken only if time permits:

- 1) Fill containers with an adequate source of drinking water.
- 2) Turn off all utilities, and contact P G & E to assist you in turning them back on.
- 3) Move valuable papers and objects to higher elevations (shelves, attics, etc.).
- 4) Bring outdoor items into the garage so that they don't become floating debris.
- 5) Take necessary medications with you.
- 6) Do not walk through flowing water.
- 7) Do not drive through flooded areas.
- 8) Stay away from power lines and electrical wires.

FLOOD INSURANCE - It is important to note that your homeowners insurance may not cover damage caused by flooding. Petaluma has received a Class Six Flood Insurance Rating. The City's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program and our insurance rating of six gives property owners a 20% discount on their flood insurance. Please ask your insurance agent for additional information about the National Flood Insurance Program. Flood insurance is particularly important and may be required as a condition of your mortgage if you live in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). The (SFHA) is the area that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has determined will be flooded during a storm that has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year, also known as the 100-year flood. Maps showing the 100-year flood areas, as well as elevation certificates, are available free-of-charge from the Petaluma Community Development Department, 11 English Street, Petaluma.

PROPERTY PROTECTION - There are many ways in which you can protect your property from floodwaters. Information on retrofitting techniques such as relocation, elevation, flood proofing, and selecting a qualified contractor is available through the Building Division of the Community Development Department. Most construction and grading projects require City permits. For example, substantially improving a structure that is located in the floodplain requires that not only the addition be elevated, but that the original structure is elevated as well. Substantial improvement means any repair, reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition or improvement of a structure, the cost of which exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the structure, not including the value of land. Be sure to contact the Community Development Department to obtain the necessary information and permits before you begin construction. Any construction being done without a permit may be putting you at higher risk and should be reported to the City Community Development Department at 778-4301.

FLOODPLAIN AND FLOODWAY REGULATIONS - The City originally adopted comprehensive Floodplain/Floodway regulations as part of the 1973 Zoning Ordinance. These regulations have undergone a number of revisions to keep them current with State of California and National Flood Insurance Program regulations. To protect the natural areas and natural functions of the floodplain, the City of Petaluma has: 1) Protected approximately 160 acres of wetlands in the Petaluma Marsh. 2) Implemented regulatory constraints on development in natural or riparian areas. 3) Enforced erosion and sediment control policies. 4) Developed storm water pollution control guidelines.

MAINTENANCE OF DRAINAGE CHANNELS - The City of Petaluma and the Sonoma County Water Agency inspect all drainage channels over which they have maintenance jurisdiction. However, there are many channels on private property that must be maintained by the property owner. It is important to keep all channels within the City clear to allow adequate drainage of storm water to the Petaluma River. Dumping of debris in any channel within the City is illegal and should be immediately reported to the Water Resources and Conservation Department (778-4304) or Police Department (778-4372).

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PLAN- The City of Petaluma adopted its Floodplain Management Plan in October 2001 and is now in the implementation process. The plan describes the history of flooding in the City, the floodplain management activities that have been used in the past, and the activities that are planned for the future.

If you would like any additional information on any of the subjects discussed, please contact Phil Boyle or Curt Bates of the Community Development Department at (707) 778-4301. In addition, information is also available at the Petaluma Public Library and City website, www.CityofPetaluma.net.