

October 1, 2004

Dear Petaluma Floodplain Resident:

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.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Petaluma have completed a majority of the Petaluma River Flood Control Project. The remaining items of work include replacement of the mainline railroad bridge approaches as well as removal of the drill line bridge. The railroad trestle bridge has been removed. The project was designed to provide protection to the Payran Area from the 100-year flood. The mainline bridge approaches are scheduled to be completed by November of this year. The drill line bridge is scheduled to be removed in 2005.

Your property is in the Special Flood Hazard Area as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). 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 on Jess Avenue and Rocca Drive had as much as five feet of water in them. It is important to be aware of this potential danger and to prepare properly for it. Businesses in the flood plain may be utilizing portions of their parking lots for water retention areas. Please do not park your vehicles in those areas during severe storms.

To help protect its citizens, particularly those in the most flood prone areas, the City has developed a flood warning system. Through this system, our Police and Fire Departments will attempt to give areas at risk as much warning time as possible. However, it is impossible to accurately predict how much rainfall may occur as storms evolve.

If Police and/or Fire Department personnel deem it necessary, notification to evacuate will be given. You will be advised to move to a safe area before access is cut off by floodwater. 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 plan. You can be assured that City officials will be working hard to set priorities and handle each emergency at hand.

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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.

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. Because of Petaluma's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program and this Flood Insurance rating, federally backed flood insurance is available to property owners at a 20% discount. 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. This is the area that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has determined will be flooded during the size storm that has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. The maps that show these areas are available, free-of-charge, from the Petaluma Community Development Department.

Once you have determined whether your home is in a special flood hazard area, there are many ways in which you can protect it from floodwaters. Information on retrofitting techniques such as relocation, elevation, flood proofing, and selecting a qualified contractor is available through the Community Development Department and Building Division. Almost without exception, construction and landfill requires City permits, most importantly, for development within the floodplain. For example, a structural addition to a house in the floodplain valued at greater than 50% of the market value of the home would require that not only the addition be elevated, but that the original structure be elevated as well. Any construction being done without a permit may be putting you at higher risk and should be reported to the City.

The City 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 in the City is illegal and should be immediately reported to the City's Water Resources and Conservation Department or Police Department.

If you would like any additional information on any of the subjects discussed please contact the Community Development Department at (707) 778-4301 or Fire Department at (707) 778-4390. In addition, information is also available at the Petaluma Library and City website, [www.ci.petaluma.ca.us](http://www.ci.petaluma.ca.us). Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Phil Boyle  
Associate Planner, Community Development Department