

# Squaw Valley Public Service District

## WINTER 2015 NEWLETTER

### Drought and Water Supply Redundancy

As California heads into its fourth consecutive year of record breaking drought, the District is evaluating the feasibility of several alternatives to improve reliability in its water system by securing a redundant source of supply.

#### The Problem

The statistics defining our current drought are disappointing and readers are warned that the following data may cause depression in fish, water purveyors, snow-starved skiers, rafters and other users of precipitation. At the end of January:

- California had only 25% of its normal snowpack for this time of year and only 15% of the April 1 average; the lowest January snowpack ever recorded
  - The US Drought Monitor has Olympic Valley in its highest Drought Intensity Category: D4, for Exceptional Drought
  - Sacramento set the record for the driest January since they started counting in 1877
  - San Francisco had no rain in January for the first time since 1850 – and who knows how further back than then?
- To make it worse, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center forecasts that the drought will persist or intensify between Jan. 15 and April 30, 2015.

#### Local Impacts

Precipitation in Squaw Valley, like everywhere, is critical to recharging the aquifer from which the District pumps water to meet our customers' demand. December brought some early storms that fortunately contributed to 59% of normal precipitation for this time of year (Jan. 31). At the end of January, aquifer levels stabilized near 6,188-ft above mean sea level. The highest level ever measured in the aquifer was 6,192-ft.; the lowest was 6,174-ft.

#### Concern

So while early winter storms helped improve drought conditions, the exceptionally dry January refuels the Board of Directors' concern about sufficient water supply and the need to con-

serve water. The District encourages water conservation and continues effective programs to manage a fourth year in a row of drought conditions. Water conservation by residents and businesses in the valley remains critically important. In compliance with the state-mandated emergency regulation for water conservation, the PSD is currently in a Stage II Drought Alert, meaning there is a "Significant Water Shortage". Required restrictions on water use include limiting irrigation to 3 days per week and constraints on filling swimming pools, operating ornamental fountains, installing new landscaping, watering hard-

scapes, fire hydrant flushing, and lodging facilities.

#### What Are We Doing About It?

The District's standard water conservation programs include metering all of our water customers and charging fees proportionate to consumption and at an inverted usage rate to discourage excessive consumption. In 2014:

- The Operations Department under the leadership of Jesse McGraw reduced the volume of water leaked from the system by 76% and completed two well repairs
- Customers reduced consumption by 5%
- Overall water production was reduced by more than 14% compared to 2013
- Overall water production is down by more than 23% compared to 2000, and we've absorbed the demands from the existing Intrawest Village since then.

Staff continues to notify customers of leaks identified by our automatic meter reading system, saving customers money and protecting personal property. And of course, the District supports work guided by the Olympic Valley Groundwater Management Plan, including coordination and communication with other groundwater pumpers in the valley to manage our precious resource with public health and safety as the group's priority.

#### Water Supply Reliability

While the PSD continues to carefully manage groundwater in Squaw, we are also seeking an alternative source of water supply to improve our system's reliability and to provide the basic



### WATER CONSERVATION TIPS



#### DROUGHT Continued from Page 1

redundancy expected in a public drinking water system. With Proposition 84 funds administered through the California Department of Water Resources, the District's Board commissioned a three-phase evaluation to assess feasibility of developing a redundant water supply source as a back-up to our current supply in the event it is impacted by long-term drought or contamination.

Phase One of the evaluation was completed in November, 2014 and defines the community's redundant and supplemental water supply needs. It also narrows the search of a potential supply source to seven specific options and excludes other possibilities for further consideration as viable sources of supply. Phase 2 will be released this winter and provides deeper evaluation of the seven potential sources and includes recommendations of which water supply options should be further evaluated in Phase 3 of the project.

To get more information on the Redundant Water Supply – Preferred Alternative Evaluation, please visit the Current Topics link on our web site at [www.svpsd.org](http://www.svpsd.org) or give us a call.

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# Fire and Safety Notes

## PERSONNEL NEWS

**Fire Captain Jim Binks** will retire at the beginning of May after nearly 30 years of service to the community of Squaw Valley. Jim started as a volunteer firefighter in 1987 and became a part-time employee in 1991. He has been a Fire Captain since 1998, served as our Training Officer for a number of years and received his Chief Officer certification from the California State Fire Marshal's office in 2007.

It has been a honor and a pleasure to work with Jim - he has always done his job with great professionalism and pride and we will miss him. Join us in wishing him a long and happy retirement!

**Allen Riley** has been promoted to Captain to fill the vacancy created by Jim's retirement and **Josh Rytter** has been promoted to Engineer-Paramedic to fill the vacancy created by Allen's promotion. Congratulations to both!

## REPLACE THOSE CO DETECTORS!

A number of years ago, our District instituted a local requirement for the installation of carbon monoxide (CO) detectors within homes. To make the transition to this regulation more palatable, we were able to secure a grant that funded the free distribution of CO detectors within our service area.

The CO detector you received at that time has now reached the end of its service life and **MUST** be replaced. Unfortunately, we do not have a grant for this, so you should purchase a new detector (or two - there should be one within 20 feet of the entrance to every bedroom in your home). Merchants selling CO detectors include Mountain Hardware in Truckee, Home Depot, Costco, Lowe's, Amazon, etc., etc.

Winter, 2015

## A Huge Improvement in Public Protection Class

Last January, I had a call from a representative of the Insurance Services Office (usually abbreviated to ISO) letting me know that she would be doing a re-evaluation of our operation and capabilities in May. The previous visit from ISO was about 12 years ago and was a decidedly discouraging event - although our Public Protection Class rating was reduced from 6 to 5 for the areas of the District equipped with fire hydrants, I felt that the ISO methodology was badly out of step with modern practice and, as a result, our department had received a much poorer overall rating than we really deserved. As a result, when I got the call last January, I was somewhat less than thrilled.

I should explain that the Public Protection Class rating is the metric that evaluates the capability of a fire department to address the risks specific to its service area. The scale is a simple 1 to 10, with 1 being the absolute best and 10 representing basically no fire protection capability. There are close to 50,000 fire departments in the United States, only 60 have a Public Protection Class of 1 (0.12%).

Notably, the Insurance Services Office has revised the Public Protection Classification system and our evaluation was done using the new protocols, which seem to address many of my concerns about the old methodology. The good news for Squaw Valley (and this is truly *great* news from the perspective of a fire chief) is that our new ISO Public Protection Class is **2** - a truly stunning achievement for a small operation such as ours. Nationally, only 810 fire departments have a rating of 2 or better, placing us in the top 1.6% of fire departments in the U.S. - which is good not only for serious bragging rights among our fire department colleagues but may result in reduced fire insurance premiums for Squaw Valley property owners (primarily in the commercial sector, however).

As Squaw Valley's fire chief for 21 years now, I am thrilled that the capabilities our people bring to the job have been recognized in this way: it's one thing to *think* that you're doing a reasonably good job of protecting your community, but it's very validating to receive such an outstanding assessment from an objective party that assesses the capabilities of every fire department in the United States. This is one of the proudest achievements of my career.

Of course, being a competitive, Type A individual, I've been looking hard at what it would take to achieve the ultimate honor in the fire service: Class 1. I think we can do it...

## Nixle Notification System Proved Valuable During the King Fire

Squaw Valley Fire Department's adoption of **Nixle** as a way of better communicating emergency information to our residents proved very valuable during the King Fire in September. Nixle is a web-based application that can provide emailed or "texted" notification to residents of a geographic area. You need to be a subscriber to information distributed by Squaw Valley Fire Department, but it's a very simple, one-step process and we use it only for urgent notifications of community-wide importance. It worked well during the King Fire - we had about 60 subscribers when that fire started and over 750 by the time the situation resolved - we urge both full-time and part-time residents to subscribe to our Nixle feeds to stay abreast of any rapidly developing situations in - or near - the Valley.

It's easy to subscribe and equally easy to unsubscribe if you choose.

For more information, see: <http://www.nixle.com/>  
To subscribe to SMS alerts, text 96146 to 888777 - you'll receive a confirmation text  
There is also an app available for iPhone and iPad: search "Nixle" in the iTunes store.

## WHY DO I HAVE TO TEST MY BACKFLOW DEVICE EVERY YEAR?

In 1988, the State of California enacted into law Title 17 of the California Administrative Code. This law required all public water suppliers to implement a Cross-Connection Control Program. A cross-connection is any device, or plumbing fixture directly connected to the water supply that may pose a health hazard.

There are many devices routinely connected to the water supply, such as hydronic heaters, landscape irrigation systems and glycol charged fire sprinkler systems that are completely safe if properly installed. However, these items

are often installed or connected by persons who are unaware of the hazards that may occur when the water pressure is reduced. For example, if the public water system is shut down for repairs the flow may be reversed. This may cause back siphonage (or "backflow") of unwanted water into the public water supply. Persons or premise's that have these connections are required to install a backflow prevention device in order to prevent back-siphoning or back pressure from contaminating the water supply.

Title 17 of the California Health Code, the Uniform Plumbing Code, and the District Water Code all require the devices be installed and that they be tested when they are placed in service and annually thereafter. Irrigation systems that are disconnected in the fall to prevent freezing

must be tested upon re-connection each spring. This test ensures the device is operating properly so it will do its job when called upon.

The District sends out reminders each spring about May 1st or 15th depending upon snow pack giving the customer 30 days to return the test certification. This helps to remind those with irrigation systems the annual test is due and it helps the District save on administrative costs by grouping all devices into the same test cycle. If the District does not receive the test certification by the end of June a

notice of non-compliance is issued per the Water Code giving the customer two weeks to have the device tested. After that the District is required to disconnect service, which will trigger additional fees.

If you have a connection like those mentioned above and are not receiving a notice or if you do not know if you have the proper device installed please call our office, your water service may pose a serious health risk. If everyone with a backflow device has it tested on time it will help immensely to reduce our compliance costs, which is reflected in your rates. So please keep our water supply safe and be responsible; have the proper device installed and keep it working properly. For additional information please contact our office and we will be happy to help.



## VANDALISM OF THE WATER TANKS IS A REAL PROBLEM

The District maintains three water storage tanks. Water storage is vital to the community; it provides water for operational use, emergencies and fire suppression. As in most communities our water tanks are located in remote areas and being out of site are subject to vandalism.

vandals at an estimated cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000, maybe more. The cost to prevent the vandalism is many times higher and may include fencing, security cameras, and increased patrols.



In order to protect the quality of water inside the tanks, the District has installed intrusion alarms that will sound a silent alarm if the access hatch is tampered with. However, this will not prevent vandals from throwing rocks and scratching or painting graffiti on the tanks. In 2011, the District spent over \$5,000 painting over graffiti on just one tank as shown in the photo. As of 2014, all of the tanks have been tagged by

The cost of the vandalism is borne by all of the District's customers in addition to the blight it brings to our community or to hikers using the tank roads to access the wilderness. The District is still recovering from the recession and continues to keep costs as low as possible. We ask that citizens help protect our water tanks and publicly owned facilities and report suspicious activity to Placer County Sheriff at 530-581-6301 or if someone is actively defacing property please call 911.

## THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

A big shout out to the following entities who helped fund the Bike Trail Snow Removal Program this year.

- North Lake Tahoe Resort Association
- Placer County
- Resort at Squaw Creek
- Squaw Valley Business Association
- Squaw Valley Resort
- Squaw Valley Property Owners Association

It wouldn't be possible without your help!



## VILLAGE UPDATE

The District completed most of the evaluations needed to understand anticipated impacts to our current levels of fire protection, emergency medical, water, and sewer services from the proposed Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan. Work remains updating the project's Water Supply Assessment with an amendment that evaluates the sufficiency of water supply under the severe drought conditions we've seen over the last three years.

The project's Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is expected to be distributed by the County's Planning Dept. in March, 2015, allowing further review of project impacts and an opportunity for the District and the public to provide comments for consideration in the Final EIR. And as the PSD is being requested to provide services, we are currently in negotiations for a Development Agreement with Squaw Valley Real Estate to establish the conditions of service for the 868-unit project, projected to be constructed over the next 25-years.