

City Water Shortage Is Real

By BILL NEUBAUER
Sentinel Staff Writer

A grave water shortage was announced this morning by city of Santa Cruz officials in the wake of Monday's storm that damaged water resources, severed a key pipeline and wiped out electrical power needed for distribution purposes.

"The situation is nothing short of critical," said City Manager Richard Wilson. "We have asked all of our industrial and school customers to stay closed. We can't see us returning to normal service for a week to 10 days."

The major problem, said Wilson, has been caused by breakage of the main 24-inch concrete reinforced pipe near the intake at the Loch Lomond reservoir.

Morris Allen, Santa Cruz water director, pleaded with all users of city water to cut their water use to "the bare minimum needed for health and sanitation. People should flush their toilets as little as possible."

The approximately 70,000 persons who draw water from almost 20,000 connections both in the city and in some outside-city areas used about 5 million gallons of water Tuesday, or about half the treated water left in the Bay Street reservoir, said Allen.

There are only about 5 million gallons more left in the Bay Street

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reservoir, according to Gene Watson, assistant water director. When this is gone, the water shortage will be acute, pending the resumption of electrical power and the restoration of damaged water resources.

The city will be unable to use Loch Lomond to replenish water supplies because the pipeline that links this ¾-mile-long reservoir to the water treatment and distribution system was severed in Monday's storm.

"It may be weeks before we can replace this pipeline and use Loch Lomond," said Allen.

Ironically, Loch Lomond filled up in Monday's storm and excess water spilled over the dam for the first time this season at 7:45 p.m., according to Walt Cacace, Lomond ranger.

Massive mudslides have damaged the city's coastal springs so that water cannot be brought down for treatment at the Graham Hill Road plant. And even if the gravity flow could be accomplished, there is no electrical power to send the water to the treatment plant and then to the Bay Street reservoir, where the city stores its treated water.

The city has also lost the Tait Street water intake, where millions of gallons are sucked from the San Lorenzo River for treatment and distribution.

Watson said the city is expecting to do some replumbing at the Bay Street reservoir today and then plans to pipe water to it directly

from Liddell Springs in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

"We should be able to get a million gallons a day from this source," said Allen. "We have also been able to bring one of the Beltz wells into service in the Live Oak area and are getting about 750,000 per day from this source."

"It is urgent for people to use as little water as possible because right now these are our only two sources of new water for distribution through the system."

"The nine feet of water in Bay Street reservoir at this time is about enough for one day unless the strictest conservation is practiced."

Pat McDonald, customer service supervisor, allayed one local fear, however, by saying, "There have been erroneous reports that the city water is contaminated. This just is not true. Following the broadcast of one such report, someone put signs on the drinking fountain on the mall warning people the water is contaminated. That has been taken down. The water is not contaminated, period."

"To conserve the dwindling supply, people should avoid bathing or washing laundry. The water should be used strictly for health and sanitation purposed, and as little as possible until the emergency is over."

The Water Department today was hoping to use some generators from the Public Works Department to get the pumps back into operation in some areas.

The DeLaveaga area is critical because this is the source of water for Dominican Hospital. Until the reservoir there is supplied, Dominican will face a very tight water situation, said water officials.