



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Board of Directors
Title: Safety and Emergency Response Program Update
From: Shaun Horne, Director of Watershed Resources
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: December 17, 2024

TYPE OF ACTION: Action X Information Review and Refer

RECOMMENDATION: Receive a staff update on the District’s Safety and Emergency Response Program

SUMMARY: The Marin Municipal Water District (District) Safety and Emergency Response Program is designed to ensure the safe operation of water utilities and to prepare for and effectively respond to emergencies or disasters that may impact water supply, treatment, watershed or distribution. The program provides regular training to staff on safety measures and ensures that safety practices and emergency procedures align with local, state, and federal regulations, as well as industry best practices.

DISCUSSION: The safety program establishes safety standards and procedures for daily operations, such as handling chemicals, equipment, and machinery, to protect employees and the public from accidents and health hazards. The emergency response program focuses on the District’s emergency preparedness, helping to develop plans for responding to emergencies (such as wildfires and earthquakes). Specifically, the program defines roles and responsibilities for emergency response teams, outlines communication protocols, and ensures resources like backup power, equipment, and supplies are available to restore service quickly and minimize health risks. These District programs safeguard public health, ensure continuous water service during crises, and minimize risks to workers and the community.

The District continuously reviews and updates the Safety and Emergency Response programs in an effort to cultivate a culture of preparedness. The District strives to create an environment where safety is prioritized, and individuals are proactive rather than reactive in managing risks and emergencies. As part of the District’s ongoing review of the Safety Program the District contracted with Harris and Lee Environmental Sciences in June 2024, a consulting firm with a rich history helping water utility companies meet and exceed local, state and federal health and safety standards. This contract entailed a detailed safety audit of the District’s facilities and practices. This work helped the District create a gap analysis detailing where the District excels and the areas with room for improvement.

This analysis and review has helped the District add, modernize, and restructure the District's portfolio of written safety programs with more updated programs on the horizon.

In support of the safety program, the District has a Workplace Safety Committee that helps to review written safety programs, identify safety hazards, and engage staff. The committee is chaired by the Director of Operations and members of the committee come from each Division of the District to ensure a diverse representation of staff responsibilities and the health and safety concerns attached to each role. The Workplace Safety Committee creates an environment where staff members can bring safety concerns, insight and improvements to key decision-makers. Having staff actively participate in the culture of safety at the District has proven to be a vital element in a successful safety program.

In early November, the District took the first step in updating the current Emergency Operations Plan. The District hosted a training for staff members with leadership roles in Incident Command System (ICS) Organizational Structure. The training reviewed the Emergency Operation Center, defined roles and responsibilities within the ICS, and laid the groundwork for expanding the training broadly to District employees. In 2025, additional trainings and desktop exercises will be carried out to better prepare the District and its staff for emergency operations.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: Not applicable.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT(S): None.