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METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Loren E. Hoff
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

January 31, 1994

To: Board of Directors -- Action
From: Chairman of the Board
Subject: Ratification of Actions of the Executive Committee Regarding
the Employee Assistance Program

Report

As you know, the January 17th Northridge earthquake has caused enormous damage to dwellings, workplaces, utility systems, transportation, and communication networks over a wide area. Due to the emergency I have authorized Metropolitan staff to take all prudent steps to maintain communication and operational readiness, to restore water service, to secure damaged facilities and buildings, and to help our employees to reestablish their normal working lives.

This letter concerns our Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which was made operational during week one following the Northridge earthquake, and will continue until the District workforce is restored to normal readiness. After extensive review, I will add an EAP component to the District's Emergency Response Plan.

The overall goal of the EAP is to help our employees and their families restore stability to their home and work lives. Our objectives to achieve this goal are to help our employees find and pay for shelter, restore their homes to livable conditions, solve commuting and child care problems, and provide continuing compassion, support and counseling.

Assessment of Impact on Workforce

With many telephone systems out of service in impacted areas on Monday and Tuesday of week one, early information on individual employee crises was obtained from two sources. First, a District HELPLINE (213-217-6275) was established Tuesday and monitored continuously on a 7-day/24-hour basis. Second, calls were placed to all Departments and Divisions to obtain further information regarding the numbers and names of impacted employees. This

initial information was followed with direct efforts to locate and speak with those employees impacted by the earthquake.

Early in week one, it was determined that 100-150 District employees were severely enough impacted by the earthquake to impair their normal work schedule and commuting routes. The word "impaired" is used because we have numerous examples of employees who reported to work to help restore water service, even though their own homes were severely damaged. The type of problems experienced by employees include direct home damage, loss of water and power, disruption of transportation routes, and concern for family members. The closure of many schools and child care facilities compounded these problems in many cases.

A summary count of employees affected by these problems as of Monday, January 24th follows. These figures do not include approximately 50 employees who have sustained heavy non-structural damage to their homes and personal property. Also, the large number of employees who live on the Westside and are facing somewhat longer commutes are not included.

	<u>Estimated number</u>
* Destruction of home, not habitable	5
* Structural damage, homes habitable	35
* Commuting, school and/or child care problems	50-100

Program Organization

Although there are many forms of emergency assistance available, Assistant General Manager Wiley Horne has formed an Employee Earthquake Assistance Program (EAP) to expedite service delivery and provide additional support as needed. The EAP organization is based in Cal Plaza and utilizes the Public Affairs division's HELPLINE communication center. A network of eleven (11) functional work teams, each charged with managing a specific problem area has been developed. The EAP table of organization is attached as Exhibit 1. Descriptions of the various aspects of the EAP follow.

1. HELPLINE ASSISTANCE (213-217-6275)

HELPLINE personnel are providing direct problem-solving. The central HELPLINE desk, plus an assigned troubleshooter and numerous divisional volunteers are establishing telephone contact with impacted employees and visiting them as needed to provide such items as, packing boxes, transportation, moral support, information on FEMA and Metrolink. A wide variety and number of calls have been processed through this centralized, one-stop service provider.

When a specific employee problem cannot be fully answered by the HELPLINE, the employee is immediately referred to one of the many District employees providing specialized assistance. PhoneMail messages have been utilized to notify employees that assistance is available. These messages have been regularly updated. The HELPLINE will remain in effect until the need for its services is eliminated. On an on-going basis the HELPLINE will be issuing bulletins and updates on special programs such as cash availability, child care assistance, commuting and telecommuting options, and FEMA assistance.

2. COMMUTING/TRANSPORTATION

The damage to the freeway system has caused a large increase in the use of public transportation, particularly Metrolink. Several employees are reporting dramatically increased commuting times and, in all likelihood, it appears that disruptions to the normal freeway system will continue for over a year. As such, it is proposed that the District increase its current Rideshare subsidy from \$60 per month to a maximum of \$125 per month. The subsidy will be the lesser of \$125 or the cost of a transit pass from the employee's home location. This is being proposed to help meet the following objectives.

- 1) assist the District in supporting requests from local and regional authorities to help reduce freeway congestion by promoting alternative methods of commuting to work.
- 2) reduce the additional anxiety and stress of employees who are facing dramatically increased daily commute time.
- 3) assist the District in meeting AQMD requirements through increased utilization of the existing Rideshare program.

Prior to the earthquake, 124 employees were participating in the Rideshare subsidy program. Of this total, 61 participants use Metrolink as their primary method of commuting. Approximately half of this number live in areas heavily impacted by the earthquake.

The number of Metrolink riders has risen since the earthquake but firm numbers will not be available until early February when reimbursement requests for the month of January are submitted. The cost of the subsidy program to the District for the 124 employees currently participating is approximately \$90,000. Increasing the subsidy to the proposed \$125 would increase the District's annual cost to \$186,000 at the current level of participation. The cost for each additional employee choosing to use the subsidy program would be \$1,500 annually.

Seven District-sponsored vanpools originate in areas impacted by the quake of which three were affected. The normal routes of these three vans have been slowed or diverted. The distribution and scheduling of vanpools will continue to be closely monitored and modified as necessary.

3) CREDIT UNION

Effective Thursday noon of week one, two new programs are in force. First, over the counter cash from member's accounts was increased from \$300 to \$500 per individual account per day. Second, 5-year loans of up to \$5,000 at the rate of 6% per annum can be obtained by qualifying credit union members on one to two day turnaround. The first payment will be deferred for 3 months, thus providing a bridge until FEMA payments become available. An employee borrowing the full \$5,000 for 5 years would repay approximately \$45 per paycheck. Notice of the program has been sent by mail to employee homes and distributed by phone mail.

4) CASH AVAILABILITY

Effective Wednesday of week one, instant check cashing for employees up to \$500 per week was instituted at Cal Plaza and at the Jensen Plant. Cash was vital in many impacted areas, especially during week one. This service will be monitored and discontinued as it becomes no longer necessary.

5) EMERGENCY LEAVE

Management has implemented an emergency leave program which allows employees up to 32 hours of paid emergency leave where necessary to deal with family distress and home damage, or where commutes were made impossible. Additionally, a second leave program is also being developed for employees who will require leave from work due to the earthquake and have no vacation, personal, compensatory time or floating holiday leave available may request an advance leave up to 80 hours. It is proposed that the leave may be used over the next ninety days and that employees will have one year to pay back the advance leave commencing May 1, 1994. This program requires amendment of existing MOU's with the various bargaining units. Initial meet and confer discussions have already commenced.

6) FEMA ASSISTANCE

The District has been distributing fact sheets to impacted employees on the FEMA program. Additionally, the District is exploring with FEMA the need for and possibility of establishing an on-site FEMA office at Cal Plaza to expedite the processing of FEMA applications.

7) CHILD CARE REFERRAL ASSISTANCE

To assess employee needs with respect to emergency child care needs, a phone mail message was sent to all employees. Calls were also made to identify openings in licensed child care facilities. Several openings were located in the downtown Los Angeles area and a limited number of openings were identified in the areas most impacted by the earthquake. This service will continue as needed and will be coordinated through the HELPLINE.

8) ALTERNATE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

A variety of alternate work arrangements are being explored. At the discretion of individual Division Managers, employees with severe commuting problems may be allowed to utilize telecommuting and/or flexible work schedules until normal commuting patterns return. The District is also exploring the option of establishing a temporary telecommuting facility at the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Castaic field facility, subject to agreement

by DWR and the District's final determination of need. The option of utilizing the Jensen facility as a temporary telecommuting site is also being explored. In some situations, Division Managers may agree to have severely impacted employees work from home utilizing portable computers.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

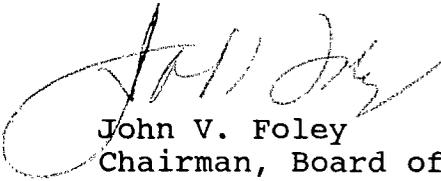
Management will meet with a forum of the member agencies to discuss permanent plans for emergency response in the future. Utilizing lessons learned from the recent earthquake, the EAP will be modified, coordinated with the members, and fine tuned so that the District's response time can be further reduced when future earthquakes or other emergencies occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the benefit of the public, in order to assure the availability and efficiency of the District's employees following the Northridge earthquake, The Executive committee acted on January 26, 1994 to authorize the measures listed below. It is recommended that the Board ratify the actions of the Executive Committee as follows:

- 1) The implementation of the Emergency Leave Program which authorizes up to 32 hours of emergency leave for employees adversely impacted by the recent Northridge earthquake, and authorize the General Manager, with approval of the General Counsel, to execute amendments to Memoranda of Understanding with the employees' associations, subject to completion of the meet and confer process.
- 2) The authorization of the General Manager to implement an emergency advance leave program as described above, and execute amendments to the Memoranda of Understanding as provided above, subject to the meet and confer process and in a form approved by the General Counsel.

- 3) The approval of the increase in the Rideshare reimbursement program for employees utilizing public transportation from \$60 per month to a maximum of \$125 per month. The reimbursement will be the lesser of \$125 or the cost of a transit pass from the employee's home location. This change has been approved by all of the employee bargaining units.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John V. Foley", is written over the typed name and title.

John V. Foley
Chairman, Board of Directors

EMPLOYEE EARTHQUAKE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

