



Behind the Scenes of Storm Work

The City's Public Works Department is divided into seven divisions. While most have a role in storm preparedness and response, the Streets Operations & Infrastructure Management Division has a special role to ensure public safety and protect our infrastructure. The Streets Division prepares for storms, patrols City streets during storm events, fights floods, and repairs flood damage. Preparation begins months before the rainy season arrives.

Preparation

The Streets Division has crews that routinely inspect every inlet and catch basin connected to our vast system of storm drains. These inspections determine if our system is clean and able to support storm flows as designed. If debris is found in pipes or catch basins, the crew will vacuum and clean out the debris. If other blockages are found, Streets staff will make the necessary repairs to get that system working properly. Sometimes that includes a complete replacement or redesign of the system. The goal is to have all of our storm drain infrastructure ready for any storm event the City will face. The Streets Division also must make sure that the Laguna Pump Station is ready to operate, and that the Laguna Channel and all of our creeks are free of debris that could cause flooding.



Storm Patrol

Prior to a storm event, Streets crews are divided into eight maintenance sections, with two crews assigned to each section. Other staff are assigned to operate critical systems, like the Laguna Pump Station, while others are assigned the responsibility of heavy equipment operation if needed.

During the event, crews will patrol their sections, providing an active response to any problems that we may encounter: mud slides, debris flows, plugged storm drain inlets, failed storm pipes, sink holes in City streets, and the accumulation of debris on our bridges. The crews carry all the signage needed to close streets and warn the public of flooded areas and other hazards.



Flood Fighting

The Streets Division is a First Responder to emergencies during rain events. Streets crews work closely with public safety personnel to respond to life-threatening events, providing heavy equipment support to clear roads or provide emergency egress for the public. There are times that crews will be actively engaged in protecting property or lives by diverting water and debris flows with sandbags, K-rails, and other devices. They also move debris from mud slides to disposal sites.

Repairs

After a major rain event, crews begin the cleanup and repair of our public right-of-way. This includes patching potholes, repairing sink holes, replacing storm drains, repairing washed-out sections of street, and clearing debris from the roadway. Sometimes fallen trees break up sidewalks, curbs, and gutters that have to be replaced. In some cases, during major storms, crews will work with contractors to remove and dispose large amounts of debris, including mud, rocks, trees, and wrecked cars. Crews must be prepared to face any number of adverse conditions and respond calmly and effectively.

Storm preparation and response is just one of the many responsibilities of the Streets Division. Although these are not everyday tasks, they are a critical part of the service provided by City Public Works.