



## Meet Lafayette's Public Works Manager

By Cathy Tyson



Ron Lefler, Public Works Services Manager

Photo Cathy Tyson

Who knew that the attractive trailer and large shed along Camino Diablo was Pothole Repair Central for Lafayette residents? Most citizens' only contact with Public Works is via the phone or e-mail when a tree falls across their street, or a storm drain is clogged. As Ron Lefler, Public Works Services Manager for almost nine years, explained one recent afternoon, that's just the tip of the iceberg.

"We maintain the city's infrastructure, keep it in good shape and keep within our budget," said Lefler, getting right to the point. He continued, "We basically maintain all the traffic signals and street lights in town, and maintain all the street and median landscaping. In the wintertime we make sure all of the storm drains are open and keep the creeks flowing. With all the recent rain, we've done really well this year."

One of their least glamorous, but most common jobs is repairing potholes. A simple straight-forward Service Request order form to report potholes or streetlight outages is posted on the Public Works page of the city website. "Most potholes we fill in about 24 hours - that's our personal goal. We have a computerized database; we track everything that comes into the office, to make sure we follow up and get things done. We try to give people reasonable timelines for repair."

It's important to note that the Engineering Department is responsible for major roadway work, and sidewalks are the responsibility of

the property owner. As much as we would like to repair all of the roads in Lafayette, there's simply not enough money.

One of the best parts of the job, according to Lefler is "the satisfaction of getting things done and within budget – that's a big thing for me. We have not exceeded an operating budget in nine years."

"I think the worst thing about the job is not getting everything done you'd like to get done. There's always a backlog of work requests. It's like doing laundry, it never ends. There's always potholes to fill, and long-term things you'd like to do like improving operations, often just can't get done because you're busy doing the laundry every day."

The department uses mostly herbicides and fertilizers and very little pesticide, all of course are EPA approved; they help keep the City's landscape investment green and healthy.

One of the big differences between Lafayette's Department of Public Works and Orinda and Moraga's is that they hire hourly labor for most of their projects. "It's cheaper. We're a small city, to keep a small crew proficient in all aspects of the job is difficult. The City pays an hourly fee that includes workers compensation and overhead." This gives them flexibility to gear up or down as needed, not keeping extra people on the payroll during slow periods.

Lefler grew up in the San Joaquin Valley, and has lived for the last 35 years in Pleasant Hill. "In my junior year of high school I knew I wanted to be a Civil Engineer." To that end, Lefler attended Fresno State where he received a Civil Engineering degree and is a registered Civil Engineer.

To report potholes or traffic signal problems call the Public Works Hotline at (925) 299-3259 or fill out and submit a Service Request form via the City Department section on the website, [www.lovelafayette.com](http://www.lovelafayette.com).