

High tech helps bolster communications during emergencies



Photo provided

Drones like this can be utilized to “beam down phone service” for up to six blocks of area from above.

By Jennifer Wake

One of the main lessons learned after the Oakland Hills fire in 1991 was the need for better communication between first responders and other agencies. For the past several years, John Cornell has

been working on enhancing technology utilized by the Lafayette Police Department and other agencies and now works as the Emergency Services Coordinator.

During a Jan. 9 Lamorinda CERT presentation, Cornell outlined existing and emerg-

ing technologies that first responders can utilize during PG&E public safety power shutoffs and flooding disasters, such as the East Bay Regional Communications System, the County VHF Repeater Network, HAM/GMRS Repeaters, SMARS, Microwave Data Networks, Cellular Backups, and portable Repeaters. New emerging technologies include mobile satellite phones, mesh technology (AREDN), satellite-based cell phone towers, digital mobile radios and ECHOLink (internet based amateur radios).

“Lafayette acts as its own internet service provider – we don’t sell it; it’s strictly for public safety,” Cornell said. “We can go out and put up a hot spot for the community to utilize.” Cornell believes everyone needs to have a cell phone, and noted that texting is the most reliable form of communication. “You can text

9-1-1 now in Contra Costa County,” he said. Lafayette PD has what it calls a COW (Cell on Wheels), which is a mobile platform deployed to areas to provide mobile cell service, and the newest addition which was developed in 2022 and spearheaded by AT&T is the Cell on Wings, a tethered drone that uses directional antennas that hang off of the belly to emit cell service from a satellite. “The drone can hover in the air beaming down phone service,” Cornell said. “This would be used in a large-scale emergency, somewhere where an entire city is affected by cell phone outages. They can probably provide service to six city blocks of coverage. Public safety would have to request it from a provider. The response time is usually between four to six

hours, approximately.” Of the emerging technologies, Cornell is excited about mesh networks, in which devices – or nodes – are linked together, branching off other devices or nodes and he believes Starlink – a satellite internet constellation operated by SpaceX – is an industry changing product. “It took a lot of work, but it is something that will be life-saving and next revolution to connectivity in places where you don’t have it,” he said. “Next year we’re going to see a lot more improvement with it.”

As for where we are now, Cornell said he feels very comfortable in Lamorinda in its ability to respond to a disaster. “We work directly with Moraga and Orinda police and fire departments,” he said. “We’re a power of three.”

To view the entire presentation, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00CYxjMPNX0>

Lafayette Reservoir Tower Seismic Retrofit Project could change look of iconic structure



... continued from Page A1

If damaged, the tower would not be able to fulfill its vital function as a spillway or outlet for the reservoir; an especially important role during seasonal atmospheric rivers and heavy, rapid rainfalls.

Bialek said the focus and highest priority of the EBMUD

retrofit project is for the tower and conduits to remain viable and safe following an earthquake. In the last report to the council in 2017, it was explained that a suggested retrofit involving post tension anchors and base isolators was not approved by the DSOD. The recommended alternative was a tower shortening to ad-

dress the seismic concerns and avoid long-term risks. She said the construction activities will begin in spring of 2024 and come in four phases: a temporary platform installation, tower sealing and dewatering, demolition to remove the top of the tower safely, and platform construction. No reservoir lowering is required, nor will public access be largely impacted, other than closures of 1-2 days while a large crane is moved into position. The loss of 8-10 parking spots for use during construction phases will be temporary.

During her presentation, Bialek showed renderings of what the tower will look like at different reservoir water levels when shortened by 40 feet. She emphasized the design plan is only 30% complete. The aesthetics of the re-designed tower – the iconic “house” is gone, a collapsible crane will be stored on the tower platform, and other visual elements – quickly became the topic receiving the greatest number of questions from the council. Several council members suggested it is likely, based on public comments in the past and at the meeting – and hypothetically, in the future – the tower design will receive considerable attention from the overall community.

EBMUD’s community outreach plan includes notifications and media advisories is-

sued for tours and forums designed for receiving public input, a project webpage with news and updates, presentations to community groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary clubs, and project signage. A water walk scheduled for Jan. 28 will be open to the public and invites people to walk around the reservoir and address their concerns and questions to EBMUD officials. EBMUD Director John A. Coleman and Jimi Yoloye, Director of Engineering and Construction, who joined Bialek at the city council meeting presentation, said they are likely to attend and be available at the reservoir walk.

Council members asked a number of questions about the reasons for eliminating the iconic house. In response, Bialek said to have included it in the retrofit would have negatively impacted the weight, and therefore, the safety of the new tower. The schematic drawings for the future platform shows that arched (instead of rectangular) openings in the platform were selected to reduce what could be a heavy, clunky profile and the platform’s parapet walls were pushed to the greatest height possible to help mask the crane and items stored permanently on the tower.

Asked why and when the crane might be needed and if

it had to be stored on the tower, Bialek confirmed it was necessary and said, “The current configuration is that it doesn’t allow for repairs without bringing in a big crane for major work.” Although that hasn’t happened during her 27 years with the district, she said it was only because the tower has not had that level of damage. With safety as the central concern, Bialek reiterated that the design phase is only 30% complete and with calls for bids not going out until the end of 2023, there is time for input during project plan completion.

Council members requested that views from different elevations and options related to adding decorative touches to soften the tower’s profile without reducing safety and functionality be considered during the months ahead.

Council Member Wei-Tai Kwok referenced the city’s website imagery and stressed the tower’s importance. He said, “If the tower was removed completely, what would we do? We might have to search for a different icon for our city. Maybe, as one of the speakers mentioned, it’s a design opportunity to create something new and iconic that’s beautiful and different from what we’ve seen before and is more appropriate for the height and size.”

Public Safety

Emergency response:
Emergency: 24 Hours 911
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours
925-284-5010

Nixle: Text your zip code to 888777 or go to www.nixle.com

Lafayette Police Department:
3471 Mt. Diablo Blvd. 925-283-3680
Chief of Police, Ben Alldritt
925-299-3221

Police Department Tip Line
94549Tip@gmail.com

Police Department Traffic Issues
94549Traffic@gmail.com

Moraga Police Department:
329 Rheem Blvd., 925-888-7055
Chief of Police, Jon King ext. 7049

Orinda Police Department:
22 Orinda Way 925-254-6820
Chief of Police, Ryan Sullivan
925-254-6820
Orindatip@cityoforinda.org

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 18 - Jan. 7



Alarms	69
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	37
Traffic	75
Suspicious Circumstances	12
Suspicious Subject	29
Suspicious Vehicle	13
Service to Citizen	68
Patrol Req./Security Check	28
Public/School Assembly Check	3
Supplemental Report	41
Vacation House Check	51
Welfare Check	29
Ordinance Violation	0
Vehicle violations	
Auto Burglary	
3300 Block Springhill Rd.	

3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Dui Misd	
3200 Block Old Tunnel Rd.	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Pleasant Hill Rd./Rancho View Dr.	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Mt. Diablo Blvd./Carol Ln.	
3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Moraga Rd./Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
30 Block Lafayette Cir. Windsor Ct./Windsor Dr.	
3400 Block Moraga Blvd. (2)	
1300 Block El Curtola Blvd. Bickerstaff St./Dewing Ave.	
Reckless Driving Moraga Rd./St Marys Rd.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Pleasant Hill Rd./Taylor Blvd.	
Dewing Ave./Mt. Diablo Blvd. Mt. Diablo Blvd./Moraga Rd.	
Road Rage Mt. Diablo Blvd./Moraga Rd.	
Stolen Vehicle Recovery Camino Diablo/El Curtola Blvd.	
3200 Block Quandt Rd.	
Tc - Property Damage 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Moraga Rd./Rosedale Ave.	
10 Block Redwood Cir. Taylor Blvd./Pleasant Hill Rd. (2)	
Mt. Diablo Blvd./Pleasant Hill Rd. Wb Sr 24 Central Lafayette/ Moraga	
Vehicle Theft 3300 Block Las Huertas Rd.	
Other criminal activity	
Commercial Burglary 1000 Block Blackwood Ln. (2)	
3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Fraud False Pretenses 3200 Block Ronino Way	
Grand Theft 3400 Block Springhill Ct. 3200 Block Ortega Ave.	
3100 Block Plymouth Rd. (2)	
3700 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Identity Theft Police Department (2)	
1500 Block Rancho View Dr. 600 Block Doreen Way	
Petty Theft 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 80 Block Iverson Dr.	

500 Block Arrowhead Dr. 1800 Block Black Reliez Valley Rd. 900 Block Sunnyhill Rd. 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Petty Theft From Veh 30 Block Lafayette Cir. 800 Block Bell St. Residential Burglary 1100 Block Laurel Dr. Shoplift 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (4) 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (3) Theft Access Card 3600 Block Powell Dr. Nuisance to the Community Disturbance-domestic 900 Block Acalanes Rd. 3300 Block Betty Ln. 3400 Block La Caminita 3900 Block Woodside Ct. 1000 Block 2nd St. Disturbing The Peace 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Loud Motorcycle 900 Block Janet Ln. Loud Noise 1000 Block Miller Dr. 10 Block Hilldale Rd. 3100 Block Somerset Dr. 700 Block Solana Dr. Public Nuisance 1000 Block Oak Hill Rd. 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2) 900 Block Moraga Rd. 3400 Block La Caminita 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 10 Block Eleven 3500 Block Terrace Way Vandalism Moraga Rd./Mt. Diablo Blvd. 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 600 Block Glenside Dr. 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 1200 Block Pleasant Hill Rd. 3300 Block Betty Ln. Other Defraud Innkeeper 50 Block Lafayette Cir. Fireworks 3300 Block Carlyle Terrace	
---	--

K9 Outside Assist Request 3400 Block Vincent Rd., Phi Loitering 3200 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Threats 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 1100 Block Glen Rd. Trespass 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Unwanted Guest 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 4000 Block Canyon Rd. 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (3) 900 Block Foye Dr. 30 Block Lafayette Cir. Violation Custody Order Police Department Violation Dom Viol Order Police Department Weapon At School 1200 Block Pleasant Hill Rd.	
---	--



Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 25 - Jan. 7

Alarms	62
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	9
Traffic	55
Suspicious Circumstances	5
Suspicious Subject	6
Suspicious Vehicle	2
Service to Citizen	47
Patrol Req./Security Check	23
Public/School Assembly Check	0
Supplemental Report	11
Vacation House Check	0
Welfare Check	4
Ordinance Violation	0
Vehicle violations	
Accident Property 10 Block Hartford Rd. Moraga Way Moraga Way/Woodland Rd.	

Auto Burglary 50 Block Brookwood Rd. Reckless Driving Camino Pablo/Miner Rd. Ivy Dr. Other criminal activity Commercial Burglary 10 Block Altarinda Rd. Fraud False Pretenses 100 Block Camino Don Miguel Grand Theft 600 Block Fox Run Grand Theft Veh Parts 100 Block Coral Dr. 10 Block Chelton Ct. Petty Theft From Veh 50 Block Brookwood Rd. Residential Burglary 400 Block Tahos Rd. 10 Block Hartford Rd. Warrant Arrest Bart Orinda Station Nuisance to the Community Disturbance-domestic 100 Block Leslee Ln. Public Nuisance 300 Block Blk Glorietta Blvd., Laf Moraga Way Orinda Way 10 Block Orinda Way Other Fireworks 200 Block Ivy Dr. Lavenida Dr./Donna Maria Way Mentally Ill Commit Piedmont Ave. Transient Contact Irwin Way 60 Block Orchard Rd. Trespass Kite Hill Rd./Orindawoods Dr. Unwanted Guest Moraga Way	
---	--