



City of Malibu News

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City of Malibu Continues to Move Forward with Outdoor Emergency Siren System as Part of Zero Power Plan for Disasters

(Malibu, CA) - The City of Malibu has prepared a siren sound study, the first step in moving forward with an outdoor emergency siren system, and the results will be presented to the Public Safety Commission during at its virtual meeting on August 5, 2020.

Outdoor warning siren systems are intended to improve emergency communications during wildfires or other disasters when electricity, cell phone and landline phone services and other communications capabilities have been knocked out due to power outages or damage to infrastructure.

"The size and ferocity of the Woolsey Fire and other California mega-wildfires was a game changer, and we are working to address the vulnerabilities that they revealed," said Mayor Mikke Pierson. "'No system is infallible, so we have to plan for systems to fail, and the outdoor siren system could be a powerful tool as an early warning system for future wildfires in Malibu."

The proposed system is part of the City's overall disaster preparedness efforts, and specifically, part of the Zero Power Plan to increase emergency communication capabilities during widespread power and phone service outages that may occur during high wind, disasters, or Southern California Edison (SCE) Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS).

The devastating 2018 Woolsey Fire damaged cell phone, landline phone, electricity and internet, creating a virtual communications blackout in the entire City of Malibu, increasing the danger of the fire, and hindering emergency communications and evacuations.

In response to the Woolsey Fire and potential PSPS conditions, the City began developing a Zero Power Plan, which includes the proposed siren system, as well as Emergency Supplies and Information Stations that can be set up along the 21-mile length of the City at gathering places such as shopping centers. The stations will be staffed by Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers and have sandwich boards with printed emergency information that can be updated daily with printed emergency information to keep residents informed even when the power or cell phones are out.

The City also purchased a large number of megaphones, flashing light bars and emergency vehicle identification placards so that City staff and volunteers can support evacuation efforts during an emergency when power and communications are disabled. The City has conducted several drills of these zero power emergency response initiatives.

As part of the siren sound study, sound propagation analysis was conducted to examine the feasibility of the project, analyze the effectiveness of different system types, and consider potential locations and the number of outdoor sirens needed.

Malibu is among several cities in the state including Calistoga, Berkeley, Sonoma and Mill Valley to pursue outdoor siren systems after the deadly wildfires of northern California.

While the siren sound study was funded by the City's General Fund, the City has applied for a federal grant to offset the cost to engineer and design the project and will pursue additional federal grants to offset the cost of the installation of sirens.

For more information about Malibu's emergency preparedness efforts, visit
www.MalibuCity.org/publicsafety.

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