



**Department of Public Works  
Engineering Division  
One North San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, California 94022-3087  
(650) 947-2780  
Fax (650) 947-2732**

August 29, 2016

Dear Property Owner:

The City of Los Altos has been participating in a national program to increase awareness of the possibility of flooding in areas designated as “Special Flood Hazard Areas” (SFHA). Once again, we are sending you this package of information regarding potential flooding and flood zones in Los Altos. The enclosed document contains general information by the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Flood Insurance Program. Please take the time to review this material. If you desire further information, please go FEMA’s web site at [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov) or contact us at the phone number listed above. This mailing is sent to property owners in the SFHA to inform each owner of the national program and to fulfill a requirement which allows City property owners to receive a 10% discount on flood insurance premiums for all new or renewed policies.

Maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2009 indicate that your property is partially or entirely within a SFHA. The inclusion of your property in a SFHA may only mean that a portion of your yard is subject to shallow flooding during a 1% or 100-year flood. For some properties it means that minor flooding could occur more frequently; in the event of a major flood, water could reach high enough to flood a basement, garage, or the living area of a house.

If you currently have flood insurance coverage, you may want to verify with your insurance agent that you are receiving the 10% reduction in your annual rate.

If you have any questions regarding the location of your property in relation to the flood zones, please call the City of Los Altos Engineering Division at the phone number listed above. However, please be aware that the City has very limited information on the location of the Special Flood Hazard Areas; we do not have information relating the flood zone to the structures or other improvements on your property.

Sincerely,

Aida Fairman, P.E.  
Associate Civil Engineer

Attachment

## **LOCAL FLOOD HAZARD**

There are four creeks that run through Los Altos, one of which you probably live near. These creeks are Adobe Creek, Hale Creek, Permanente Creek, and Stevens Creek. In addition, there is the by-pass near Blach School, which carries overflow from Permanente Creek to Stevens Creek. All of these creeks may subject your property to flooding during periods of heavy storms.

During storms in the past few years, water from Hale Creek spilled out onto several local streets, and Adobe Creek overflowed onto several properties. Additionally, portions of Redwood Grove and Shoup Park along Adobe Creek are regularly flooded during heavy storms. Your property may be high enough that it was not flooded in the past years. However, it could still be flooded in the future under more severe storm conditions. The enclosed flyers give you some ideas of what you can do to protect yourself and your property. Additional information on flood safety and floodproofing your home is available at the Los Altos Library. For more information on the location of your property compared with the flood zone, call the Engineering Division at 650-947-2780.

## **DON'T DUMP!**

Several of the City's efforts depend on the assistance of the people that live along the creek. Here is how you can help:

1. Do not dump or throw anything into gutters, ditches or creeks. Dumping, of anything, is a violation of Los Altos Municipal Code, for more than one reason. First, even grass clippings and yard clippings can accumulate and plug channels. A plugged channel cannot carry water, and when it rains the water has to go somewhere. Use your curbside recycling program or home compost pile to dispose of your yard waste. Each year the City must remove debris and dirt from the storm drain system. In addition to plugging channels, dumping anything in the drainage system pollutes storm water runoff and the San Francisco Bay.
2. If your property is along a creek, please do your part by keeping the banks clear of dumped debris (such as yard waste or construction material). The Santa Clara Valley Water District may maintain a portion of your property along the creek if they have the proper easement. The District has a maintenance program, which can help remove major blockages such as downed trees if the District has the proper easement.
3. If you see dumping in the creeks or dirt shoulders of roadways contact the Police Department at 650-947-2770.

## **CONSTRUCTION**

Because your property is in a Special Flood Hazard Area remember the following:

1. Always check with the Building Division before you build on, alter, regrade or fill your property. Changing the terrain at your property may increase flooding somewhere else along the creek (the water has to go somewhere). A permit will probably be needed to make sure your project does not cause a problem on other properties, and to make sure that all work meets City requirements.
2. The National Flood Insurance Program requires that if the cost of new construction (remodeling), addition or other improvements to a building is 50% or more of the buildings market value, then the building must meet all new building requirements. The Building Division reviews plans to ensure that these requirements are being met.
3. For questions regarding building permits and requirements or if you see construction which may not be permitted, contact the Building Division at 650-947-2752.



## ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A FLOOD IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

### YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS BROCHURE BECAUSE YOUR PROPERTY IS IN OR NEAR A SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREA.

➤ **History of Flooding in the City of Los Altos.** It is critical to remember that the City of Los Altos is subject to flooding near the creeks that flow through the city limits. If you live next to one these creeks, being prepared is your best defense. Los Altos is subject to storm surge, flooding from heavy rains and high tides.

#### ***What should you do before a flood?***

➤ **Determine if your property is located in an area subject to flooding.** The following areas have a known potential for flooding:

Adobe Creek	Hale Creek
Permanente Creek	Stevens Creek

This is not a complete list of areas that are within flood zones, but rather a list of areas with

documented flooding problems. A property located within a flood zone does not necessarily have flooding problems. If your neighborhood is not listed, your property may still be within a flood zone, as designated by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps though not likely. Upon request, the Engineering Division at (650) 947-2780, will make free flood zone determinations for properties within the City. FEMA maps are also available in Main City of Los Altos Santa Clara County Public Library. If located in an "A" Zone, your property is within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), which is an area that has been determined to have the potential for flooding caused by a 100-year storm.

➤ **Purchase flood insurance on your property.** Flooding is not covered by a standard homeowner's insurance policy. A separate flood insurance policy is required to cover damages incurred by flooding. Coverage is available for the building itself as well as for the contents of the building. The City of Los Altos participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) that makes available federally backed flood insurance for all structures, whether or not they are located within the floodplain. Note that there is a 30-day waiting period before coverage goes into effect. More than 25 percent of NFIP claims are filed by properties located outside the 100-year floodplain, also known as the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). Contact your insurance agency for more information.

➤ **Maintain drainage channels and pipes free of obstruction and debris.** The Santa Clara Valley Water District performs cleaning and maintenance activities on most of the drainage channels in their property or their easements & rights-of-ways in accordance with an established schedule and other standard operating procedures. The City of Los Altos performs routine cleaning and maintenance of

the underground storm drain pipe system within the city limits. Residents are encouraged to assist in maintaining the drainage in their areas by removing or reporting obstructions (such as shopping carts, leaves, debris, trash, etc.). Keeping drainage channels free of obstructions reduces flooding in the event of heavy rains. By way of City ordinance, it is illegal to dump trash, leaves, landscape debris, paint, grease, or any other material into any portion of the City's drainage system. Such dumping can have devastating impacts on water quality in addition to causing flooding. To report obstructions or illegal dumping, or for questions regarding drainage system maintenance, please contact the Maintenance Services Division at 650-947-2785.

➤ **Protect your property from the hazards of flooding and wind.** Various methods may be used to minimize flooding. Though not likely in the City of Los Altos, but if the floor level of your property is lower than the "Base Flood Elevation" (elevation of the 100-year flood, based on the FEMA maps), consider elevating your structure, if possible. If a flood is imminent, property can be protected by sandbagging areas subject to the entry of water into living spaces. The City of Los Altos Municipal Service Center located at 707 Fremont Avenue has sand bags available for pickup by residents.

➤ **Meet improvement requirements.** The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requires that if the cost of reconstruction, additions, or other improvements to a building equals or exceeds 50% of the building's market value, then the building must meet the same construction requirements as a new building. Substantially damaged buildings must also be brought up to the same standards. For example, a residence damaged so that the cost of repairs equals or exceeds 50% of the building's value before it was damaged must be elevated above the base flood elevation. Please contact the City of Los Altos Building Division at 650-947-2752 for more information.

➤ **Meet permitting requirements.** All development within the city requires a permit. Always check and fulfill permitting requirements with the Planning Division at 650-947-2750 and/or Building Inspections Division at 650-947-2752 before you build on, alter, fill, or re-grade on any portion of your property. Also, contact either of the numbers above to report any suspected permitting violations.

➤ **Keep an emergency supply.** Non-perishable food, water, batteries, flashlights, a manual can opener, and a battery-operated radio should be kept available.

### ***What should you do during a flood?***

➤ If your property is in imminent danger of flooding, please contact Pacific Gas and Electric to request that your power and natural gas be shut off, or for guidance on how to do it yourself.

➤ Tune-in to local commercial radio or television stations for Watch and Warning Bulletins and any corresponding emergency instructions.

➤ If dangerous flooding conditions are imminent, avoid driving a vehicle if possible. Do not attempt to drive or wade through deep pockets of water or running washes. Unstable banks should be avoided.

➤ Develop an evacuation plan for your family. seek shelter in the highest areas possible.

### ***What should you do after a flood?***

➤ Listen to the radio for emergency instructions.

➤ Avoid driving if possible.

➤ Follow established procedures for property damage repairs:

Select a contractor who is licensed in his trade. The City of Los Altos requires contractors to be licensed with the State of California and to have a City of Los Altos Business License. Licensed and/or Registered contractors will also be able to produce evidence for their licenses. Only licensed electricians may perform electrical work, only licensed plumbers may perform plumbing work, only licensed gas contractors may work on a gas system, only licensed mechanical contractors may perform heating, ventilation and air conditioning work, and only licensed building contractors may perform building related work. Verify that contractors are licensed before signing or agreeing to any repair contracts. It is also recommended that you verify certification of liability and workman's compensation insurance. Complaints against licensed contractors may be referred to the appropriate licensing agency.

Require your contractors to obtain the proper permits for work being performed. Permits are required for any permanent improvement (including painting, roofing, siding, additions, alterations, etc.) to a structure and for site work such as grading, filling, etc. Permits are required even if a homeowner is doing the work himself.

Questions about permits or contractor licensing may be addressed to the City of Los Altos Building Division at (650) 947-2752

***Recognize the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains to help reduce flooding:*** Floodplains along creeks are a natural component of the City of Los Altos environment. Understanding and protecting the natural functions of floodplains helps reduce flood damage and protect resources. When

flooding spreads out across the floodplain, its energy is dissipated, which results in lower flood flows downstream, reduced erosion of the stream bank and channel, deposition of sediments higher in the watershed and improved groundwater recharge. Floodplains are scenic, valued wildlife habitat, and suitable for farming. Poorly planned development in floodplains can lead to stream bank erosion, loss of valuable property, increased risk of flooding to downstream properties and degradation of water quality.

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### **For more information about flood safety or the NFIP, please note the following:**

[http:// www.floodalert.fema.gov](http://www.floodalert.fema.gov) or

[www.fema.gov/hazards/floods](http://www.fema.gov/hazards/floods)

1-888-FLOOD29

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*This information is provided by the City of Los Altos and is applicable to properties within the limits of the City. If you reside in a jurisdiction other than the City of Los Altos, contact your regulatory authority for information. If you believe you received this notice in error, or if you no longer own this property, please contact the City of Los Altos Engineering Division at (650) 947-2780 or via U.S. mail.*