

# **Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council**

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## **Summary of Tuesday, September 26, 2017 Meeting**

### **PCAC TOUR OF MARITIME TRAINING ACADEMY PRECEDED BY RECOUNT OF HURRICANE HARVEY EXPERIENCES**

PCAC's August 24, 2017 meeting was cancelled because it was too close to the hour when Hurricane Harvey was expected to begin affecting the greater Houston area. Knowing members would have questions about how PCAC plants and the city and county fared in the storm, the September meeting agenda was expanded to allow time for reports on Hurricane Harvey before the planned presentation about maritime education and tour of the new San Jacinto College Maritime Training Academy.

#### **Hurricane Harvey**

PCAC members learned that a few plants ran through the storm, many shut down ahead of the storm, and some did so when waters continued to rise. No storm-related injuries were reported. Most plants had no environmental incidents. Most did not lose power. Rising water caused problems in some plants, covering equipment or flooding office buildings. Rainfall also caused some roof leaks.

Most left a ride-out crew on site. Cameras allowed some to monitor the storm's effects from afar. Most ride-out crews primarily managed water. The need pumps for pumping out storm water was a lesson learned for some. Because flooded roadways prevented relief crews from getting to the plant, crews stayed longer than expected in some cases. Improved food supply and quality was a recommendation from some ride out crews. Some plants described inspecting storage tanks before the storm and filling them as needed so they would not float. Gulf Coast Authority provides regional wastewater treatment for industry and municipalities. Their Washburn Tunnel facility received more water than could be treated before discharge. They sampled the water as required but could not analyze the samples because flooding prevented their reaching the lab.

All plants checked on employees after the storm. Some said communications went well while others learned the need for updating phone lists and for training employees about call-in numbers to report their status.

One plant representative after another reported they had numerous employees affected by the flooding, with damages to homes or cars or both. Companies all found ways to assist those employees. Some provided personal time off so employees could deal with their flooded homes. Many companies had ways for their employees from other cities to assist their Houston associates. Donations were made not only to national and local organizations but also to individuals via grants or interest free loans. Workers not harmed by the storm helped their coworkers muck out houses and tear out sheetrock and carpeting. Corporations sent trucks of dehumidifiers, generators with fuel, cleaning kits,

and personal protective equipment like masks. Some helped with housing, car rental, and finding reputable contractors. One even funded vaccinations at a city clinic for adults exposed to unsanitary floodwaters.

City of Pasadena Emergency Management Coordinator Frank Bengochea said the city experienced 42-52 inches of rain during the course of the storm over its approximately 60-square miles of land. Near the Washburn Tunnel, 18 inches of rain fell in 3 hours. For a period of 72 hours, no hospital was reachable south of I-10 and east of I-45. The city set up an emergency mobile unit that provided emergency care and a landing spot for helicopters to ferry patients to distant hospitals as needed. The city had six evacuation shelters and two distribution shelters to assist residents. Emergency responders assisting in the effort numbered 350-400. More than 1000 water rescues were performed.

Harris County Industrial Liaison David Wade told members who visited TranStar last spring that every seat in the county's Emergency Operations Center was filled with representatives of agencies involved with the storm and its aftermath. The Harris County meteorologist, Jeff Linder, warned the county early the week of the storm to plan for historic flooding levels. This allowed Harris County Judge Ed Emmett to request disaster assistance designation for the county *before* the storm. This enables personnel and equipment to be staged to come quickly into the county when needed.

## **San Jacinto College Maritime Academy Overview and Tour**

John Stauffer, San Jacinto College Associate Vice Chancellor Maritime Technology & Training Center, provided a brief overview of the center prior to the PCAC group touring the facility that opened in spring 2016 on the Bayport Ship Channel in Shoreacres.

Mariners used to have to travel to ports across the country to take the training courses necessary to maintain or advance their licenses. In 2010, San Jacinto College began offering training for these incumbent mariners. The demand soon was too great for their rented facility to accommodate. At the same time, the college saw a need to establish an Associate's Degree in Maritime Transportation that would provide well-educated, entry level mariners. They developed a curriculum for a two year degree and began designing a facility that would accommodate classes and experiences to train not only incumbent mariners but also students starting a career in the maritime industry. Key components of the program are 2 summer internships aboard commercial vessels. The program currently offer 75 US Coast Guard approved courses.

The features of the new ship-shaped facility give students realistic experiences captaining a ship. PCAC members were able to practice steering a slow-moving, large vessel up the Houston Ship Channel through a vicious storm while another vessel passed it. They also practiced handling a fire boat as it raced to respond to a ship fire. These computer simulations, so realistic that members had trouble getting their sea legs, were made possible by the donation of a Bridge Simulator by the Houston Pilots and other equipment given by various maritime companies. A simulated engine room is linked to the bridge where the captain is handling the ship. The facility also includes a radar training center, water survival training area, and barge tie up training dock.