



-PUBLIC NOTICE-

CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

The Carnation City Council will hold a Special Meeting on Tuesday, September 15, 2020, beginning at 5:30 PM to discuss the After-Action Report for the False Alarm of the Tolt Dam Warning System.

This City Council meeting will take place online. Members of the public are invited to observe or listen to the meeting online or by phone by using the links or phone numbers below.

DATE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

TIME: 5:30 PM

LOCATION: HELD REMOTELY ON MICROSOFT TEAMS

<https://bit.ly/200915ws> (direct link)

or visit

<https://www.carnationwa.gov/ccagendas>

or call

(509) 724-0556 or (833) 827-2625 (Toll-Free)

Conference ID: 934 071 555#

For inquires and/or assistance regarding how to use the City's online meeting format please visit <https://www.carnationwa.gov/teams>, email clerk@carnationwa.gov, or call (425) 549-0403.



JULY 28, 2020 TOLT DAM WARNING SYSTEM FAILURE AFTER ACTION

SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES DRAFT AFTER ACTION REPORT SYNOPSIS: During the late morning (11:15 am) of Tuesday July 28th, the Tolt Dam Warning System sounded a false alarm that for 38 minutes erroneously messaged the community of Carnation to evacuate... An investigation into the causes of the false alarm was started immediately after the incident and is ongoing... On August 3rd, representatives of SPU/SCL and some partner agencies participated in a Community Meeting hosted by the Carnation City Council to discuss the ongoing investigation of the incident, listen to the community impacts due to the false alarm. Wednesday August 5th, a subsequent test of the Tolt Dam Failure Warning System informed SPU that repairs were needed for several sirens.

Post-Incident Actions (already underway) and Areas For Improvement:

- Modifications to SPU alarm control systems (Whelen panel)
- Repairs to sirens amplifier/functioning
- Spare parts and warning system repairs
- Multiple agencies responding to community information requests
- Accelerated timeline for system replacement Capital Project
- King County OEM and Sheriff's Office 9-1-1 notification and Operating Procedures updated
- Needed public notification regarding false alarm or not, and systems redundancy at all levels
- Support and strengthen Carnation Citizen Corps and Riverview School District involvement
- Faster community notifications (with redundancy) from public safety/emergency management
- Improve community evacuation plans with public safety, City and County OEM
- Expand the annual Riverview School District evacuation drill with City and County OEM

CITY OF CARNATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: While participating with the Seattle Public Utilities After Action Review, it has become apparent to the City of Carnation that SPU's response is more limited in scope than the City of Carnation feels is needed to better prepare for both a real emergency evacuation or false alarm. The City's report is not intended to find fault or attach blame, but to better address the wider community needs beyond just notifications.

On July 28, 2020 about 11:15 a.m. there was a False Alarm of a Tolt Dam Failure that went out telling the Carnation area community to evacuate immediately. While a False Alarm, the incident revealed many technical and emergency management shortcomings for all parties throughout the notification system.

Communications from warning systems to SPU failed, and SPU notifications to the City and surrounding community to verify whether or not if it was a Test or if it was a False Alarm failed. While the community generally responded in a calm and orderly manner, there was much confusion and trauma involved.

The City of Carnation was incorporated in 1912. The Tolt Dam and water reservoir was built in 1962. While the City of Carnation is responsible for emergency management within the City of Carnation and King County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) for surrounding community areas. Carnation believes Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) bears the bulk of the responsibility both for alerting AND in supporting community readiness, since they created the potential hazard of a Tolt Dam Failure AFTER the City and surrounding communities were established.

While the probability of a Dam Failure is remote, the possibility of an earthquake or other event causing a Dam Failure would be catastrophic, both in potential loss of life and property damage. While the City of Carnation and King County OEM must help their citizens prepare for the possibility, however remote, of a real Dam Failure, Seattle Public Utilities is ultimately responsible for the costs of these extraordinary preparations, since they created the hazard.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS OBSERVED BY THE CITY OF CARNATION (See SPU Chronology for more):

11:15 Alarms sound, but with different tones and garbled P.A. announcements saying “Evacuate”.

11:16-11:20 SPU Control and dispatch center call lines were overloaded and not accessible to the City

11:18 City Clerk attempts to contact SPU contact numbers to verify, but no responses; City Manager and Clerk begin alerting Councilmembers that the alarms are REAL, NOT A DRILL and evacuate City Hall.

11:20 Public Works crews to Shops to load small tools and backhoe to take to Evacuation Hill, cars already blocking the access to be limited to emergency vehicles only; Evacuation Hill is for pedestrians.

11:23 City Clerk calls 9-1-1 and at that time Dispatch had no knowledge if the Alarm was real or false. (We have since learned that the system had also failed to properly notify the SPU Control Center.)

11:24 Dispatch 9-1-1 contacts SPU and determines it is a False Alarm, and then notifies NORCOM, Fire, City, School and other agencies.

11:26 The City’s KCSO Deputy arrives at City Hall to learn it is a False Alarm.

11:30 ESFR Fire and City Police Deputy begin announcing that it is a False Alarm. Meanwhile the P.A. and sirens continue to announce “Evacuate.”

11:49 Reverse 9-1-1 notifications are received by some citizens on their cell phones but not others.

11:51 Alarms and sirens continue to sound and announce “Evacuate.”

Noon Approximately around noon the sirens and announcements cease.

Due to COVID-19, schools were not in session, though it was the school’s personnel who were among the first to get through to County 9-1-1 and initiate verification of a FALSE alarm. The senior Center was also not operating so emergency evacuation of Seniors was not needed. Because of years of schools drills it was many of the area children that knew to WALK up Evacuation Hill, when many of their parents weren’t sure what to do, whether by walking or by vehicle.

REDUNDANT SYSTEMS TO SPU AND SPU TO THE COMMUNITY: While TPU has many different technical and physical systems built for alerts TO SPU of any Dam Failure, or to monitor and determine if a False Alarm, we now know that a single control panel failed and delayed notifications to SPU's Control Center. We also have learned that some of the alarm/P.A. units were not operating properly or at all. To TPU's credit, most of these units have been repaired or replaced. However, given community growth in recent years, there are several dead spaces where even functioning alarm/P.A. units are not heard nor audible. TPU was in the process of a system upgrade, and has now accelerated this process and timeline.

While redundant notification systems from the dam itself to SPU failed, and are being reviewed, redundant notification systems from SPU to the community also proved inadequate. Current computer and cell phone notification systems from SPU to the community need to be upgraded and redundant: Code Red, Reverse 9-1-1, Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), Alert King County, HAM radio, TV and radio stations; the Notification Flow Chart 1 of a false alarm needs to be UPDATED, TESTED AND MAINTANED BY SPU. A pager type system that can vibrate is also needed to alert deaf or hard of hearing residents. Also, Carnation and King County OEM need to have priority access to dispatch and SPU Control .

SIGNAGE AND EVACUATION ROUTES: While traditional signage improvements are needed showing vehicle evacuation routes and pedestrian only routes, new technologies should be used to have normally passive signs go active when alert activations are sent, maybe using solar panel technologies tied to cell phone alert technology. The WSDOT owned traffic signal at Entwistle needs to be able to be overridden by Public Health & Safety Committee. Police and Fire should assist in directing vehicle evacuations.

EVACUATION HILL: Evacuation Hill is intended as a short-term assembly area, not a long-term shelter. Once any flooding has subsided, if long-term shelter is needed, persons needing shelter would be moved to outside the area shelters coordinated through the Red Cross. That said, in the event of a real event, Evacuation Hill may still need to be able to support several hundreds of individuals 360/24/7: day, night, winter or summer conditions. And the site itself is likely to be isolated for many hours. (See attached.)

The pedestrian trail access to Evacuation Hill on the north side needs major improvements and lighting in the near term and maintenance in the long-term. The south side access needs to be for emergency vehicles and pedestrians; Public Works or Fire should block all unauthorized vehicles.

ONGOING COMMUNITY EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND EXERCISES: The City of Carnation and King County OEM have the larger responsibility with support from SPU in continuously updating community preparations for emergencies in general and a Dam Failure emergency in particular. SPU should provide technical assistance and financial support for various video, web-based and print materials. Ongoing CERT and City community outreach is needed to churches, HOAs, and other community groups. SPU needs to sponsor Carnation's Annual Dam Walk exercise with CERT.

COMMUNITY ALERT NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS: King County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has two active means of alerting citizens through their cell phones or land lines. First is the Code Red/Alert King County system but that requires citizens to OPT IN by registering or signing in to receive emergency notifications (go to www.kingcounty.gov/alert). The second is the Wireless Emergency Alert system that

goes to all cell phones in the designated area, BUT you need to be sure you have not turned off this feature of your cell phone. The City officials also need to have priority access to the SPU Control Center and to the King County OEM Duty Officer through non-public numbers that will not get overloaded with incoming calls.

SIGNAGE: Evacuation route signage for pedestrian and vehicular use needs to be provided both in the City, and up and down the Valley. Traditional or fixed route signs need to be supplemented with normally passive signs, solar powered, that can be activated by SPU or KCOEM/City to notify the community of a needed evacuation or false alarm (similar to the Amber Alerts on the freeways). The Entwistle traffic light owned by WSDOT needs to be able to be overridden by public safety for traffic control. Lighted entry beacons for both the north pedestrian trail and south emergency access road.

EVACUATION HILL : As stated earlier, Evacuation Hill is not a Shelter area per se, but may involve extended time as a Staging area prior to returning home or to area shelters if needed. Stocks of basic supplies should be maintained and rotated by the Red Cross in coordination with the City. Basics should include simple popup tents for sun or rain shelter, space blankets, ponchos, food packs, water supply, basic first aid supplies, AND dog and cat food.

CONCLUSION: SPU bears a larger ethical and moral responsibility beyond the legal minimums for community notification. Working with the City of Carnation and King County OEM, these three agencies are responsible for coordinating with ALL other related governmental and non-governmental partners: NORCOM, KC9-1-1, Eastside Fire and Rescue, Sheriff, Riverside School District, CERT, Senior Center etc.