

SAFETY ELEMENT

Introduction and Authorization

The Public Safety Element to the City's comprehensive General Plan analyzes a series of major potential hazards to life and property within the City of Hermosa Beach. Based on this analysis, the Element recommends programs of action to minimize both the risks and their impact. This process focuses on features necessary for community safety such as evacuation routes, water supply, hospital facilities, communications.

Although Hermosa Beach does not face certain hazards common throughout Southern California, such as forest fires, high rise fires, landslides, or floods, it clearly shares the potential threat of major earthquake and residential or commercial fires.

There are evident relationships between the Safety and Seismic Safety Elements. The Seismic Safety Element recognizes seismic hazards and their possible effects on the community as related to building codes and zoning, while the purpose of the Safety Element is to introduce safety considerations in the planning process (general emergency preparedness) to reduce loss of life, injuries, damage to property and economic and social dislocation from seismic, fire and other hazards to the public. The Safety and Seismic Safety Elements are key inputs to other General Plan Elements because they define safety parameters vital to effective land use planning.

In 1971, the California State Legislature amended the requirements for general plans to include a "Safety Element". California Government Code, Title 7, Chapter 3, Article 5, Section 65302.

Purpose and Methodology

The Element analyzes the significant areas of risk to determine their relative importance as hazards. The format of this comparative analysis is intended to develop a framework which can be expanded in the future. As data becomes available, the relative risks to life and property resulting from hazards such as automobile accidents, disease, or violent crime can be incorporated into the Element. As required by the State's General Plan Element Guidelines, the comparative risk situation, when combined with information concerns the City's ability to reduce these risks or mitigate their impact, allows a clear focus on determining the levels of risk which are acceptable to the community. Public decision working bodies have the ultimate responsibility for making the determination of what is "acceptable", and the Safety Element is intended to serve as a tool for making these policy decisions.

The safety goals and objectives which guided the preparation of the Element are as follows:

1. Definition of the relative importance of hazards facing the community, including their frequency of occurrence and level of probable impact.

2. Alternative strategies to reduce the occurrence of major disaster emergencies.
3. Alternative techniques for reducing the potential consequences of major disaster hazards.
4. Evaluation of present response capabilities.
5. Creation of comprehensive programs to increase preparedness and safety in the city.
6. Determine the cost in resources necessary to impliment recommended actions.

The Safety Element is intended to provide a major input to the City's Emergency Operating Plan and to develop an analytical basis for response planning.

Fire Safety Objectives

1. To maximize the level of fire prevention and to minimize the potential hazards to life and property in the City of Hermosa Beach.
2. To minimize the response time to fire and rescue emergencies.
3. To identify fire hazards and develop appropriate code requirements and inspections to mitigate the hazard.

Implementation Policies

1. Encourage an increase in the number of yearly safety inspections of manufacturing and commercial developments, schools and place of public assembly.
2. Maintain paramedic services.
3. Implement an automatic response system with Redondo Beach and Manhattan Beach that the closest units will automatically be dispatched to the emergency.
4. Establish a Fire Prevention Bureau within the City of Hermosa Beach or an area bureau with Redondo Beach and Manhattan Beach. In conjunction with this bureau, establish a strong public information program, and in conjunction with the bureau and the Building Department, a strong code enforcement program.
5. To maintain adequate emergency access in new subdivisions, cul-de-sacs, and street closures. In existing alleys and narrow streets, a strong parking and trash enforcement program to keep alley clear for emergency access is necessary.
6. Any replacement of smaller water main (6") be made with 8" or larger mains.
7. Establish adequate sideyards of at least 3 ft. clear for residential developments and maintain a strong enforcement program to keep these sideyards clear of trash and obstructions.
8. Consider consolidation of Police and Fire Services into a public safety agency.

Railroad Crossing Safety

The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad line runs north-south through the length of Hermosa Beach between Valley Drive and Ardmore Avenue. The right-of-way for this track is 100 ft. There are five crossing points (figure 11) from east-west streets.

1. Longfellow (area)
2. Gould-27th Street
3. Pier Avenue
4. Eighth Street
5. Second Street

There are no other vehicular crossing points which does restrict east-west flow and access. This could be a factor in an emergency situation. It would be accentuated if Valley and Ardmore were one-wayed.

Currently, there is a minimum of railroad traffic, approximately one train a week, passing over this track; however, there is nothing to prevent a greater use of these tracks at a future date. This is particularly relevant since the County Board of Supervisors has suggested considering such right-of-ways for commuter/rapid transit trains. If this occurred, there would be a tremendous safety problem for the city as well as difficult east-west access.

The crossing points are generally marked with unlighted wooden signs saying "Railroad Crossing." At Second Street there is only a sign for east bound traffic. At Pier Avenue there is a swinging red light suspended from the sign for westbound traffic and just a wooden sign for eastbound traffic. There is also a spur line that crosses Ardmore at 16th Street which is only noted for northbound traffic by a wooden sign.

The five traffic intersections involved are regulated only by stop signs, there are no signals. There have been fifteen (15) automobile accidents at the Pier/Ardmore/Valley intersection which crosses the tracks. This indicates that this is a difficult intersection with just cars to contend with. If at a future time there was an increase in the rail usage, this could become an extremely dangerous intersection.

Objective

Insure maximum safety at rail/auto (and pedestrian) intersections and maintain adequate usable east-west access.

Policy Implementation

1. Installation of lighted signs at all rail-auto intersections, for both east and west bound traffic.

2. If there is a significant increase in frequency of rail traffic (more than 5 times a week) there should be safety devices such as mechanical arms, bells, and flashing lights installed by the railroad to restrict people and autos from crossing in front of trains.
3. That trains be limited to 10 m.p.h. in the city, particularly since their right-of-way is open on all sides.
4. If at a future date Ardmore and Valley are one-wayed, an additional crossing be established at 21st Street to improve emergency and normal access east and west.