News from the City!

When You Hear the Hi-Lo, It’s Time To Go!

June 2021 - By City Manager, Rachelle Rickard

As always, the health and safety of our residents and community is the City’s number one priority and concern. We are very pleased to announce that, if needed, we now have an additional method to notify Atascadero residents of the need to evacuate immediately during an emergency, and “if you hear the Hi-Lo, you know it’s time to go!”

California’s recent massive wildfires illustrate the importance of being able to evacuate large populations quickly - to have the ability to get residents out of harm’s way when just minutes count. The new Hi-Lo style sirens have been in use in the Bay Area since 2018, when a pilot project began in the Sonoma, Napa and Solano County sheriff’s departments after many residents failed to receive evacuation alerts during the deadly 2017 fires. Few residents had official warnings that fires had broken out across the region, even hours into the firestorm. Following a number of recent massive wildfires in California, there were calls from all over the state highlighting the need for better alert systems.

Until recently, the Hi-Lo alerts were not allowed by the California Highway Patrol, which has authority for determining what sirens can be used in the state. New legislation authorizes the use of Hi-Lo sirens “solely for the purpose of notifying the public of an immediate evacuation in case of an emergency,” and not for regular emergencies. They may now be installed in ambulance, lifeguard, police, fire, emergency services or forestry vehicles.

The distinctive sound made by the Hi-Lo sirens cause people to pay attention. Unfortunately, it’s been shown that most people have become somewhat numb to regular police, ambulance and fire sirens. However, with the Hi-Lo siren, you’ll never hear that particular sound unless there is a major problem and you need to evacuate. This European-style, two-tone siren makes a very distinctive and unfamiliar sound.

During a local emergency, responders and residents may not be able to rely on traditional electronic communications, including television, radio or social media, for emergency notifications. The Hi-Lo siren is another great tool to have available in the City’s emergency response tool belt, and is an additional option to be able to contact residents during an extreme emergency. It will only be used for immediate evacuation notifications and during a situation of extreme emergency.

We hope we will never need to use it, but if you do hear it, remember - the Hi-Lo siren means one thing only – evacuate immediately. In other words, “Hi-Lo, Time to Go!”

If you have questions about this or another City-related topic, please feel free to contact me at rrickard@atascadero.org.
News from the City!

When You Hear the Hi-Lo, It’s Time To Go!

June 2021 - By City Manager, Rachelle Rickard

Atascadero’s New Evacuation Alert Siren - **Hi-Lo = Time To Go!**

The new European-style 2-tone siren will only be used in an emergency to alert residents within specific areas of the need to evacuate.

“If you hear the Hi-Lo, It’s Time To Go.”

www.atascadero.org/fire