



INTER OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the City Council

FROM: Jason Mitchell
Director of Oakland Public Works

SUBJECT: Oakland Public Works (OPW)
COVID-19 Service Impacts

DATE: May 26, 2020

This purpose of this memorandum is to update the City Council on OPW's operations in light of COVID-19.

Overview

During the pandemic and up until May 1, 2020, OPW had a 30% staff availability rate, staff absences either due to illness or vacation increases that number even more. Despite these challenges, OPW staff remains committed to providing services to the residents of the City of Oakland. Recently, staff in the Keep Oakland Clean and Beautiful Division set a record for the number of illegal dumping work orders completed in a single day: 291. OPW has not stopped working, and is doing what it can to keep our City clean and safe, and our infrastructure working. However, COVID-19 did temporarily affect how we work, and much like businesses in the private sector, the City of Oakland and OPW are working diligently to adapt to this new normal. Currently, and until this pandemic subsides, Oakland residents should not expect an immediate return to normal service levels. Due temporary measures taken to ensure to worker safety and to comply with the Alameda County Health Officer's Shelter-In-Place Order, there is a backlog of work. It will take time to catch up on the backlog of open work orders. Additionally, we expect that illegal dumping is being underreported, so we are asking the community to continue to use OAK311 to report illegal dumping and infrastructure maintenance issues.

Increased Capacity to Address Illegal Dumping

OPW has partnered with Waste Management of Alameda County, Inc. (WMAC), to provide additional illegal dumping cleanup support. WMAC has increased illegal dumping services during the shelter in place, by adding more trucks dedicated to illegal dumping cleanup. On May 28, 2020 WMAC deployed four packer trucks, four drivers and eight additional workers who will work Monday through Friday to help clean up dumping under City direction. For the first week, WMAC removed nearly 60 tons of debris. This program will end on June 30, 2020 and WMAC will resume to their normal arrangement to abate 30 illegal dumping locations each day.

These efforts supplement staff cleanup assignments to both respond to complaints and proactively clean up known hot spots as part of the proactive Garbage Blitz Crew program OPW piloted in 2018 and [expanded in 2019](#). There are now three OPW Garbage Blitz crews tasked with proactive pickups, and the WMAC crews will focus in the area with the highest number of requests for service and consist of Embarcadero to West Grand Ave. and Wood St. to MLK Jr. Way – known as Zone 1 (of a total of four zones – allowing the City to dedicate one OPW Garbage Blitz Crew to each of the other zones).

Waste Management will service Zone 1 in the same fashion that the City's Garbage Blitz Crew proactively removes illegal dumping at main thoroughfares, hotspots, and block by block.

Understanding Illegal Dumping with COVID-19

Under normal circumstances, among the key data points the City uses to better understand and tackle the illegal dumping problem are those found in community-generated service requests – calls that residents make to OAK311, or complaints they report online or through the free OAK311 mobile app. The data regarding illegal dumping in Oakland during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may be difficult to draw conclusions from: calls from community members requesting maintenance service are significantly down in several categories, including illegal dumping. Although the service data does not indicate an increase in illegal dumping, recently, we have received more comments from elected and members of the public stating that they see more dumping in neighborhood. Although the data are not clear, OPW is responding to illegal dumping service requests. Staffing levels were temporarily reduced for employee safety, but we are now all staff have been called back to work.

Temporary Suspension of Parking Enforcement for Street Sweeping has Impacted OPWs Ability to Clean Streets

As part of the County's Health Order the City of Oakland voluntarily suspended enforcement of street sweeping regulations. Street Sweeper Operators are still sweeping, but they are not able to effectively clean streets and roadways due to cars being parked along the curbside. Again, the City will continue to message to vehicle owners to voluntarily move their cars; however, maintaining clean public right of ways, will continue to be impacted due to a lack of enforcement as vehicle owners were more diligent about moving their vehicles when there was a possibility of a fine.

Community Engagement

Originally, our engagement has only included social media networks including Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor to share messaging about City services. We recognize the limitations of that approach are looking to broaden and amplify our approach. We will begin using multiple channels for advertising including radio, billboards, direct mailing, and social media ads to provide simple, easy-to-read information about how trash and litter affect community health, and what they can do about it. The OPW Communications Team will work with the Citywide Communications Director on these messages.

As OPW ramps up work to respond to these issues, we encourage residents to #BeOaktownPROUD by participating in the Oaktown PROUD campaign – by encouraging their neighbors to practice sanitary and safe trash disposal, using affordable waste services such as the new and temporary [Bulky Drop Off service](#), and reporting illegal dumping to OAK311 by:

- Dialing 311 or 510-615-5566
- Reporting online at 311.oaklandca.gov
- Emailing OAK311@oaklandca.gov
- Using the free OAK311 mobile app for Apple and Android devices

OPW Communications Team staff will be reaching out to your offices to understand the specific concerns of your constituents and to provide a response.

Conclusion

OPW appreciates the opportunity to provide this update to your office about the current status of our operations.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Jason Mitchell, Director of Public Works, at (510) 238-4470.

Respectfully submitted,



JASON MITCHELL
Director of Oakland Public Works