



NOVEMBER 21, 2024

## **EBMUD statement on Lafayette Reservoir Tower Seismic Upgrade**

The East Bay Municipal Utility District is the owner and operator of the Lafayette Reservoir and tower. As a public agency, we are committed first and foremost to public safety. While EBMUD understands the City of Lafayette's and some of the resident's special connection with the tower, the project is required for earthquake and overall dam safety as determined by the California Division of the Safety of Dams (DSOD), which regulates dams around the state. DSOD considers the tower to be a critical structure for dam safety because it also serves as the spillway and is the only safe method to drain water from the reservoir. DSOD categorizes the risk downstream of Lafayette as "extremely high", and therefore the safety deficiencies posed by Lafayette Tower must be addressed.

EBMUD has been coordinating with the city on this project since 2015. Over several decades, EBMUD has evaluated multiple alternatives including some innovative designs to maintain the height of the tower, but they were not approved by DSOD. In 2017 EBMUD presented three alternatives to the City Council, two of which maintained the tower height. The City Council favored shortening the tower since it eliminated the hazard and ultimately the other two alternatives were not viable. EBMUD concluded that shortening the tower was the most appropriate approach.

After DSOD approved EBMUD's shortened tower proposal in 2021, EBMUD worked with the community to collaborate on some of the aesthetic elements of the new, shorter tower, resulting in an operating house on top of the tower that closely resembles the current structure. EBMUD planned to begin the construction in the summer of 2024. Instead, at the request of the city, the District spent significant time and resources over the last year to develop and analyze proposals put forward by a group of local residents interested in keeping the tower at its original height. EBMUD's detailed analysis showed that the alternative put forward by the community group did not meet safety standards.

DSOD responded to a request by the City of Lafayette to consider other alternate concepts, and stated, "EBMUD has fully evaluated numerous remediation alternatives, including some innovative designs to preserve the top of the tower, but those designs were found to be inadequate." A preliminary analysis of another alternative put forward

by the community group was found to be less reliable, more difficult to safely construct on the 91-year-old tower, and would result in a higher price (an additional \$8 million more than the current approved design). Furthermore, the design would need to be approved by DSOD, which given our experience and discussions with DSOD, would not likely be approved.

Though DSOD indicated that a new alternative might be considered if submitted by April 1, 2025, EBMUD has exhaustively studied numerous alternatives with consultants and with the City's advisory group. EBMUD has determined that attempting to develop a further alternative that maintains the taller tower height would not likely be approved by DSOD and thus not be a wise use of customers' rate dollars.

EBMUD plans to move ahead with the tower shortening project in 2025. It is EBMUD's responsibility to move this critical project forward as quickly as possible, given that a failure of the Lafayette Tower poses severe health and safety risks to residents, schools and businesses from Lafayette to Martinez.

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The East Bay Municipal Utility District has a proud history of providing high-quality drinking water for 1.4 million customers in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

EBMUD's wastewater system serves 740,000 customers and helps protect the ecosystem of San Francisco Bay. EBMUD is a not-for-profit public agency established in 1923.

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