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Union Sanitary District Continues Work on Union City Sinkhole Repair

Repair work to damage caused by an October 14 sinkhole in Union City continues this week, as Union Sanitary District (USD) undertakes a complex project to assess and repair a damaged sewer pipe.

The damaged pipe is 33 inches in diameter and runs 20 feet below Alvarado Boulevard in Union City. A nearby manhole also was damaged when the sinkhole occurred.

Assessing the extent of the damage to the sewer pipe has been hampered by difficult soil and groundwater conditions in the affected area. The groundwater level is very high and soils are unstable, which makes it impossible to simply excavate the damaged pipe without risking additional damage to the street and other utilities. The presence of groundwater above the damaged sewer pipe also makes it impossible to assess the damage with a remote camera.

The initial excavation was backfilled immediately following the repair of a water main about 10 feet above the USD sewer pipe. This was done for safety reasons, as well as to stabilize the pavement and allow the reopening of one traffic lane.

Before a complete assessment can be performed and the best repair option selected, USD must stabilize the site by pumping the groundwater out of the

area. This will require the drilling of three wells, each about 30 feet deep and two feet in diameter, through which the groundwater will be pumped.

When the area is stabilized, USD will assess the damage, select the best method of repair to the damaged pipe, and complete the repairs. Without knowing the precise nature of the damage, it is not possible to project a completion date at this time.

Throughout this project, the damaged sewer pipe must be bypassed so that sewer service is not interrupted. Currently, this is being achieved with pumps and a bypass line running along Alvarado Boulevard. In the next week, USD expects to finish the installation of an underground bypass line and remove the street-level bypass lines. It is hoped that an additional eastbound lane may reopen as soon as the middle of next week, after the underground bypass is completed.

Repair of the damaged sewer pipe will require the ongoing closure of one westbound lane of Alvarado Boulevard between Fair Ranch Road and New Haven Street. This lane will remain closed throughout the entire project. USD has been able to keep one lane open in each direction, and is making every effort to minimize the impact on street traffic and to safely reopen lanes as quickly as possible.

“Our objective in this project is to protect the safety of motorists and others in the area while performing a repair that will be permanent and effective,” said Paul Eldredge, USD general manager. “This work has been our number one priority, and it will remain our priority until the repair is complete and the street is fully reopened,”

Although no estimate of a completion date is possible at this time, USD will continue to provide updates on this project as it progresses.

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Union Sanitary District operates a 33 million gallon per day wastewater treatment facility in Union City and provides collection, treatment and disposal services to a total population of over 344,000 in Fremont, Newark and Union City, CA. The District maintains over 800 miles of underground pipeline in its service area. For more information about Union Sanitary District, please visit www.unionsanitary.ca.gov.