



EL NIÑO COMMUNITY MEETING • OCTOBER 12, 2026

Your Questions, Answered

Thank you to everyone who joined us and sent in questions. Here are answers to the questions asked during the Q&A, organized by topic. We will keep adding answers as more questions come in.



REPORTING PROBLEMS & GETTING HELP

Q How do I report problems like fallen trees, clogged drains or localized flooding?

Call the Carmel Police Department's non-emergency line at (831) 624-6403. It's staffed 24/7, and the dispatcher will route your report to Fire or Public Works. Save 911 for true emergencies.

Q Who do I call about a loud generator running around the clock?

During normal business hours, call Community Planning & Building at (831) 620-2010. After hours, call the Police Department's non-emergency line at (831) 624-6403. Only call 911 if it's an emergency, like a generator on fire.

Q Can someone from the City look at my property and recommend where to put sandbags?

Yes. As time allows, Public Works is happy to stop by and offer recommendations. Call (831) 620-2070 to set up a visit. In general, place sandbags at low points where water could flow into your garage or living spaces.

Q Where can I get sandbags, and how many can I take? Will someone help me fill them?

Free sandbags are available at two locations: the Sunset Center south parking lot and the Vista Lobos parking lot (see map on page 5). Please start with about five so there are enough for everyone, and come back if you need more. City staff will be on hand to help older residents and anyone who needs help filling bags. If you can't pick them up, call Public Works at (831) 620-2070. Crews may be able to drop them off, depending on availability.

Q Which address should I give first responders?

Please use your new numbered street address, and post your house numbers where they're easy to see. Numbers tell responders which block and which side of the street you're on before they arrive.

Q I'm traveling out of the country, and a neighbor says my property is damaged. Who do I contact?

Contact the Carmel Police Department at (831) 624-6403. It's staffed 24/7. Officers will check on your property and send Public Works or other help if needed. Email is also a good option if calling is difficult.



POWER & UTILITIES

Q What's the plan for extended power outages? Do we all need generators?

PG&E works to restore power as quickly as possible, but everyone should have a backup plan. Don't count on power, internet or even tap water during a big storm. A plan can be as simple as a portable battery, or a home battery system if that's within your means.

Q What kind of outlet recharges a portable battery backup?

A standard household wall outlet. Smaller units cost around \$500 and charge from a standard wall outlet. Larger units can power a refrigerator for days and typically cost \$1,000 to \$2,000. If your power is out, you may be able to recharge at a City center during major storms.

Q How do I learn about installing a standby generator on Carmel's small lots?

Every parcel and zoning district is different, so please contact Community Planning & Building at (831) 620-2010. Staff are ready to answer generator questions.

Q When trees bring down power lines, how quickly does PG&E make repairs?

PG&E crews are on call 24/7. In large storms, damage can stack up fast. Last Christmas, trees hit power lines at 192 locations across the county within a few hours. Crews make sites safe first, then work outward from the power source, so customers at the end of a line are often restored last. If you see a downed power line, stay away and call 911, then PG&E at 1-800-743-5000.

Q How does PG&E estimate when power will be back on?

Estimates are based on what crews are seeing, the weather forecast and years of experience. Like weather forecasting, it's part art and part science.

Q Can the power lines be put underground? How much of PG&E's new undergrounding plan is for Carmel?

Undergrounding in Carmel is complex. Homes need new service connections and electrical panels, and transformers must move to the ground on narrow streets without sidewalks. City leadership is working with PG&E to explore what could be possible in the near and distant future. PG&E's current Electric Undergrounding Plan focuses on high fire-risk areas, mostly rural.



STAYING INFORMED

Q How will we communicate if cell service and internet go down?

The County and City will work together to share information the old-fashioned way, such as posting updates at the library and going door to door with police and CERT volunteers. The state can also send a temporary mobile cell tower, though it takes a couple of days to arrive. These devices are called "Cellular on Wheels," or "COWs."

**Q Who makes official announcements during an emergency?**

The City Administrator is the central point for emergency decisions and communication, working closely with the City Council. The Mayor also shares information during events.

Q How will I be alerted to an emergency?

Sign up for Alert Monterey County to get free emergency notifications by text, phone or email at alertmontereycounty.com.

**EVACUATIONS & FLOODING****Q What would trigger a citywide evacuation, and where would we go?**

The City plans and practices for worst-case scenarios, such as a severe storm combined with an offshore earthquake and tsunami. In a tsunami, most of Carmel would only need to move to higher ground. Homes nearest the water, like those along Scenic Road and San Antonio Avenue, face the highest risk. Hundreds of residents joined the City's evacuation drill to Carmel Middle School, and lessons from that drill have strengthened our plans.

Q What's being done about flooding near Rio Road, Mission Fields and the Carmel River schools?

The County has approved a short protective wall along homes next to the lagoon, and a larger Carmel River floodplain restoration project is in permitting. Neither will be finished this winter. If your home has flooded before, please watch for alerts from Monterey County and plan ahead in the event of an evacuation during major storms. The County will manage the lagoon sandbar as permits allow, has purchased temporary flood barriers for the Paso Hondo area, and will restock sand and sandbags throughout the winter.

**TREES****Q Will the City relax the rules and waive fees for removing trees before winter?**

The City's tree rules remain in place, but staff are actively assessing dead, dying and dangerous trees. Permit fees are set by the City Council, so staff can't waive them. In a true emergency, such as an uprooted tree, no permit or fee is needed to make the scene safe. If you have a dangerous tree, please don't wait for a storm. Contact the City now.

Q Are there warning signs that a Monterey pine may fall?

Watch the base of the tree. Warning signs include the base moving in the wind (not just the top), cracks in the soil, water or soil pumping up around the roots, a new hump on one side, or a change in the tree's lean. If something doesn't look right, call the City right away.

Q My neighbor's tree hangs over my property, and they're out of town. What should I do?

Contact Public Works at (831) 620-2070 and share photos by email or in person. Staff can help you reach the owner and will work with the Police Department in a true emergency. For trees that threaten power lines, use PG&E's free Report It app at pge.com/reportit.

**Q How many at-risk trees are being removed before the rainy season?**

The City has permitted PG&E to remove about 90 trees and trim about 500. The City has also removed about 60 trees this fiscal year, with more work planned before winter, plus pruning, stump removal and replanting.

**STAFFING, VOLUNTEERS & NEIGHBORS****Q How does the Fire Department have enough people for everything that needs to happen in a big storm?**

Six stations serve our area as part of a larger regional system. Crews move to where they're needed most, and nearly 90 members can be called in. California's mutual aid system can also bring in help from across the state.

Q Is the City coordinating with Pebble Beach and neighboring cities?

Yes. The City partners with the Pebble Beach Community Services District, including on fire fuel reduction in Pescadero Canyon, and is meeting with peninsula cities on mutual aid. Local fire agencies and CAL FIRE also help one another as needed.

Q Will City staff be available during the winter holiday closure?

Yes. This year's closure is modified. Every department will have on-call staff who can reach the City within an hour. If severe storms are forecast, the City Administrator can cancel the closure so all staff are available.

Q Do our volunteers have what they need?

Yes. Our CERT and VIPS teams are well supported, with annual City funding, generous community donors and new rain gear for this season. We love our volunteers!

Q How can I help my neighbors, especially older neighbors?

Get to know your neighbors. Not everyone has extra water, food or backup power. If you're worried about someone, call the Police Department at (831) 624-6403 and they'll check in. Neighbors who need extra help can also be added to the Carmel Safety Alliance Program, so police and fire can check on them before and during storms.

Q Is there an app to report problems or let the City know a neighbor needs help?

Not yet. The City is piloting an app called Go Carmel for reporting issues like potholes, and is considering a way to flag a neighbor who needs help. Look for it early next year.

Q How do I join CERT?

Carmel CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) has about 33 volunteers, and new members complete a training course before serving. To join, contact Wanda Vollmer at wcvollmer13@gmail.com or Scot Smythe at scot@smytheglobal.com.



FREE SANDBAG PICKUP LOCATIONS



Vista Lobos parking lot



Sunset Center south parking lot

KEEP THESE HANDY

Police (non-emergency, 24/7)
831-624-6403City Hall
831-620-2000Community Planning & Building
831-620-2010PG&E emergencies & downed lines
1-800-743-5000Alert Monterey County
alertmontereycounty.comReport trees near power lines
PG&E Report It app*Have a question we didn't cover? Email shinds@ci.carmel.ca.us and we'll add the answer to our website.*