



ORO LOMA NEWS

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www.oro-loma.org

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Al Camisa—An Oro Loma Legend

The year 1962 was an important one for Al Camisa. That year, Al decided to leave school with a major in chemistry and math and go to work for the City of Hayward wastewater treatment plant as a chemist. New environmental measures meant chemists were becoming even more important to the wastewater treatment process. In 1969, Al left Hayward to become the chemist for Oro Loma's newly-constructed secondary treatment plant. He has stayed with the District ever since.

When Al retires in July 2009, he will have been with Oro Loma for forty years.

In his early years with the District, Al was fortunate to be exposed to people who would become leaders in the new discipline of sanitary



Al Camisa in 1969

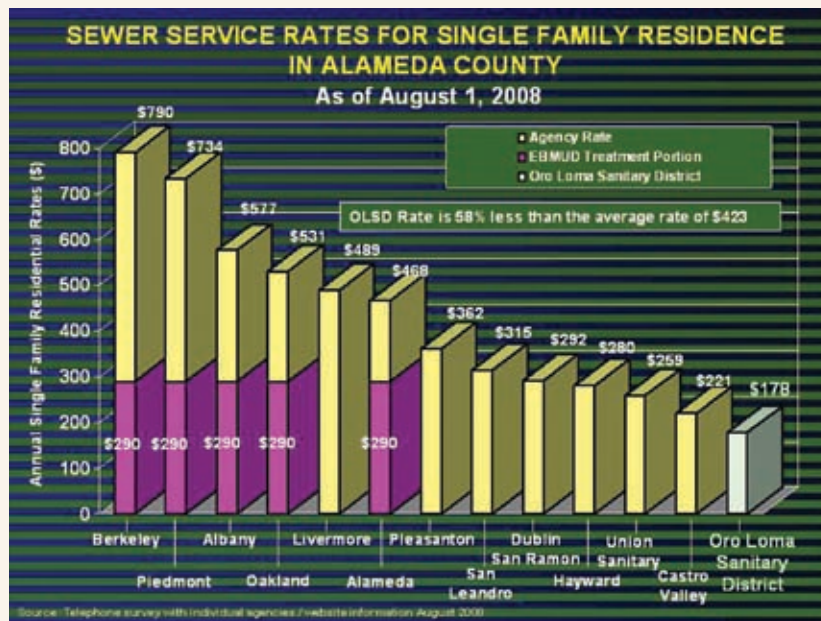
engineering, people like David Jenkins, UC Berkeley professor, who wrote the manual on the activated sludge process of treating wastewater, and Harry and John Jenks, who designed the Hayward plant. Many UC students who visited the Oro Loma plant to get hands-on experience went on to be CEOs of engineering firms themselves.

From the very beginning, the District recognized the talent of their chemist and allowed Al the freedom to do his job in a way that is most efficient for him and for the District. This is something Al values most about his time at Oro Loma.

In addition to maintaining the health of beneficial organisms in the aeration tanks, Al looks after

Continued on back page.

Oro Loma's Annual Residential Sewer Rates Lowest in Alameda County



Oro Loma residential sewer rates are the lowest in Alameda County—by almost 60%. The Board of Directors and staff of Oro Loma are proud of their commitment to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost. Your average rate is 49 cents per day.

E-Waste Collection Event

On Saturday, September 13th, 432 vehicles dropped off over 34,000 pounds of obsolete and unwanted electronic equipment at Oro Loma's second e-waste event of 2008. The event, free to all participants, was held in the Arroyo High School teachers' parking lot.

Since February 8, 2006 it has been illegal in California to dispose of universal waste in the trash.



Oro Loma Wins CASA Award

Oro Loma received the 2008 Organizational Innovation Award from the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) for its participation in designing a program to train new wastewater treatment operators.

Many operators came into the field in the 1960s and '70s, with the passage of the Clean Water Act. Close to 50% of all current operators are expected to retire within seven to ten years, and it is vital that new well-trained operators are available to replace them.

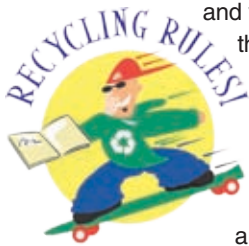
Working with other water and wastewater agencies in the Bay Area and with Solano Community College, the District helped design a comprehensive training program leading to a Certificate of Achievement in Water/Wastewater or an Associate of Science Degree.

Besides training new operators, the collaborative effort with 12 regional water and wastewater agencies provides the framework to address other shared concerns, including biosolids disposal, recycled water, and other water quality issues within the Bay Area.

Oro Loma Earth Day 2009 Poster Contest—RECYCLING RULES!

Show us why recycling is important, and what the rules are for recycling in Oro Loma, and you might win a first place prize of \$700, a second place prize of \$500, a third place prize of \$300 or one of two honorable mentions of \$150 each. Entry forms for the Oro Loma Earth Day 2009 Poster Contest are printed in the Oro Loma 2008-2009 calendar, and will be available online and in schools on January 20, 2009.

Entries in the 2009 poster contest may be submitted from January 20, 2009 through March 20, 2009. The rules for recycling in Oro Loma are available at www.oroloma.org.



Recycle Your Holiday Tree

- January 5 through January 16, 2009;
- Green trees only;
- Trees that are 6 ft. or under, or are cut into lengths of 6 ft. or less;
- NO snow flocking, tinsel, or ornaments;
- NO tree stands or nails;
- Place tree next to your green cart on your regular collection day.
- Bulky pickup is suspended during the holiday tree pickup period.



Notes:

Flocked trees cannot be recycled. However, they will be picked up curbside at no additional cost January 5 through January 16, 2009, on your regular collection day.

Flocked trees will not be picked up curbside after January 16, 2009. To discard **flocked trees** after this date, cut them up and place them in your **garbage** cart.

After January 16, 2009, green trees will not be collected curbside. To recycle **green trees** after this date, cut them up and place them in your **green** cart.

For further information, call Waste Management at (510) 613-8710.



Oro Loma General Manager, Jason Warner, holding CASA award

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resident's Message

As we come to the end of 2008, it's important to look back on the year's accomplishments. In 2008, the District lowered sewer service rates by eight percent, entered into an agreement to purchase 500kW worth of solar power capacity at a discount to PG&E rates, maintained a safety

record that puts Oro Loma in the top 10% of similar agencies for the last three years, helped initiate a regional operator training program to fill a need for new wastewater operators, and met all wastewater permit requirements for the year.

Looking forward, the District will con-

tinue its service and responsibility to Oro Loma customers. Let us know your ideas, concerns, or comments, by calling, writing, or attending our Board meetings on the first and third Tuesdays of every month at 3 pm. You can also visit us online at www.oroloma.org.



Solar Energy Project

Oro Loma presently generates 81% of the energy needed to operate its wastewater treatment plant, through the use of two 360-Kilowatt generators that run on methane gas supplied by the plant's five digesters. The power plant provides an economically advantageous and environmentally sound power source, but it still means that the District needs to purchase 19% of its energy requirement from PG&E. Last year the District purchased 2 million Kilowatt hours of electricity at an average cost of 15 cents per Kilowatt hour, for a total of \$300,000.

Because of the potential economic benefits and Oro Loma's commitment to the use of renewable energy, the District last year began to explore the possibility of using electricity generated by solar arrays.

Through its research, staff determined that the best approach would be to identify a company to provide solar power, and enter into a power purchase agreement with it. After receiving five proposals, the District identified Renewable Technology Inc. (RTI) as the provider with the lowest cost and best technology.

Under the terms of the agreement, the District will provide the land, and RTI will design, build, and maintain the solar array. The District will then purchase the power produced by the array. Electricity purchased from RTI will cost 11.8 cents per Kilowatt hour, which is a savings of 3.2 cents per Kilowatt hour over what the District is presently paying to PG&E.

The project should be completed in 2009.

No Drugs down the Drain

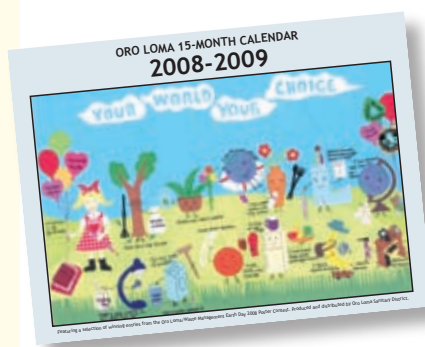
Prescription and over-the-counter medications are an important part of our lives. Sometimes our lives depend on them. But what about prescriptions that have expired or were never taken? What about those little red pills you think you bought for a cold last year, but you're not sure what they're for? How do you get rid of those? Your first instinct might be to flush them down the toilet. *That would not be right!*

Although modern wastewater treatment plants are efficient at removing many of those contaminants from the wastewater stream, no plant is able to remove them all. The EPA warns that sewage treatment systems are not specifically engineered to remove pharmaceuticals, and those drugs can pass intact into waterways, lakes and even aquifers when people dispose of unused medicines by flushing them down the toilet. Further, discarded pharmaceuticals often end up at dumps and landfills, posing a threat to underlying groundwater.

Traces of popular heart medications, anti-depressants, antibiotics, cholesterol-lowering drugs, chemotherapy drugs, veterinary drugs, and hormones are turning up in groundwater across the world. A recent water quality study found those and other drugs present in San Francisco Bay. The easiest way to limit the amount of these potentially hazardous drugs in our water is to not flush them down the toilet or pour them down the drain.

Alameda County residents can bring unwanted prescription and over-the-counter drugs to the Oakland, Hayward, or Livermore household hazardous waste site. If possible, medications should be in their original containers, but the sites will accept those that are not. Be sure to remove your name and identifying information from all medicine labels. Controlled substances are not accepted. For information on how to safely dispose of controlled substances, email HHW@acgov.org.

Alameda County residents should bring proof of residency when visiting a county household hazardous waste site. Hours of operation and directions are available at www.household-hazwaste.org or call (800) 606-6606. For more information on the potential danger of pharmaceuticals in the waste stream and what you can do about it, visit www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org.



Free Oro Loma 2008-2009 Calendars Delivered

Free 15-month 2008-2009 calendars, featuring winning posters from the Oro Loma/Waste Management Earth Day 2008 Poster Contest, have been delivered to schools throughout the District. Calendars may also be picked up at the District office at 2655 Grant Avenue in San Lorenzo.



Oro Loma Sanitary District
2655 Grant Avenue
San Lorenzo, CA 94580

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**Oro Loma
Residential Sewer
Rates
Lowest in
Alameda
County**

Al Camisa continued from the front page.

the bacteria in Oro Loma's digesters. Here, sludge from the sedimentation tanks is biologically processed before being turned into biosolids that can be used in landscaping. Generators use digester gas to provide power for the Oro Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant. If the bacteria in the digester aren't healthy, they can't do their job.

Much of Al's time is spent making sure the District meets the ever increasingly stringent state and federal water quality standards, but that still leaves time for Al to pursue projects that help Oro Loma in other ways. One of these research projects resulted in a paper, entitled "Analysis and Characteristics of Trichloroethylene Wastes," that was published in an international peer-reviewed journal.

A commercial processing plant in Oro Loma's area wanted to use trichloroethylene to decaffeinate coffee. It was the first time this chemical would be introduced into the District's wastewater stream and Al was concerned that it would be detrimental to the beneficial bacteria needed

in the wastewater treatment process. To find out, Al built a model digester and developed a method of detecting minute quantities of trichloroethylene in wastewater. Al was right—trichloroethylene was a hazard that would have compromised Oro Loma's ability to treat wastewater. The coffee processing plant switched to water, and trichloroethylene was later identified by the EPA as a possible carcinogen.

Except for the occasional assistance of a temporary lab tech, Al works alone, and that's how he likes it. He would rather get the job done on his own terms. His solitary nature is also the reason Al declined an offer to move up to management himself.

Al has declined numerous invitations to enter his name in award competitions. However, that doesn't mean he doesn't promote the idea of a career in wastewater treatment. Al's son Matt has followed him to the wastewater industry, where he



Top: The Oro Loma Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant completed in 1969, replacing the one built in 1948

Bottom: The Oro Loma District wastewater treatment plant, restored in 2007

works as a plant operator for Oro Loma.

In addition to his son Matt, Al has a daughter, Sharal, who is director of a scientific non-profit organization. After retiring, Al plans to spend time with his wife, Sharon, traveling, pursuing shared artistic interests, and discovering new adventures—all without worrying about a time schedule. He also hopes to stay involved with Oro Loma on a part-time basis. After forty years, it's hard to leave.



Left: Al Camisa, District chemist. Right: Sharon, Sharal, Matt, and Al Camisa.