

# PIPELINE

A newsletter about protecting public health and the environment



How should I pack  
and transport my  
household  
hazardous  
waste?



We offer **SAFE** tips-  
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# The Ghosts of Central San Past, Present and Future

In the Charles Dickens classic, "A Christmas Carol," Scrooge is visited by ghosts of the past, present and future. I believe we can all benefit from reviewing the past, focusing on the present, and planning for the future. In Central San's case, doing this enables us to maintain our status as a world-class organization and ensure that you receive the best value for the services we provide.

## PAST

The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District was formed in 1946. At the time, State health authorities considered the polluted conditions resulting from failing septic tanks to be among the worst in California. Creeks and wells were becoming contaminated. A typhoid outbreak was a distinct possibility.

The construction of Central San's sewer system and wastewater treatment plant did wonders to protect public health and the environment, but it didn't happen overnight and there were many problems along the way. Among the early snags were insufficient capacity to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population, and difficulty in raising funds for crucial repairs and expansions.

But adversity isn't always a bad thing, and the need to overcome tough challenges resulted in innovative solutions, groundbreaking processes, and a culture of continuous improvement.

## PRESENT

Many things have changed since 1946: the size and population of our service area; the processes and technologies we use

to collect and treat wastewater; the growth of environmental awareness and the associated tightening of water quality regulations. Central San evolved, adapted, and changed as the world around us changed.

What didn't change was our commitment to protect public health and the environment.

Today, a key component of that mission is our Pollution Prevention Program and associated public outreach efforts (such as this newsletter) to raise awareness and encourage activities that keep pollutants out of the bay.

With your help and support, Central San grew from humble beginnings to become one of the best wastewater collection and treatment agencies in California – and the entire nation.

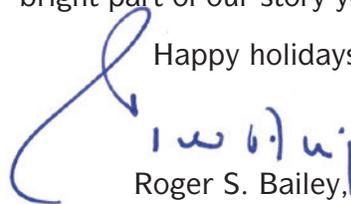
## FUTURE

I believe the future will bring many challenges. Increasingly stringent environmental regulations, population growth, and climate change will affect everything we do at Central San.

We will be ready. By planning for the future, making good financial decisions, implementing new technologies and processes, and maintaining a highly-skilled and dedicated workforce, we will remain a world-class organization that provides our customers with exceptional service and value.

We have a lot of fantastic opportunities ahead of us. As we move forward with the same passion and vitality that Scrooge demonstrated after his ghostly visits, the future will be an exciting and bright part of our story yet to come.

Happy holidays!



Roger S. Bailey, General Manager



# Businesses Lauded for Protecting the Environment

Congratulations to this year's recipients of Central Contra Costa Sanitary District's Annual Pollution Prevention Awards!

We conduct our Pollution Prevention Awards program each year in conjunction with National Pollution Prevention Week, the third week of September. Since initiating the program in 1992, we have recognized 100 local businesses for their exceptional efforts to minimize pollution.

This year's winners are:

- **The Rising Loafer Café and Bakery** in Lafayette: Recognized for using environmentally friendly cleaning techniques; for conserving water, electricity and other resources; for an extensive recycling program with a goal of zero waste; and for proactively working to further reduce their environmental footprint.

- **San Ramon Dental Arts** in San Ramon: Recognized for implementing new X-ray and instrument sterilization technologies, processes, and practices that reduce chemical use and pollution; for recycling; and for conserving energy and other resources.

- **Dental Office of George Wong, DDS, and Grace Wu, DDS**, in San Ramon: Recognized for using a dry-vacuum system that saves 31,000 gallons of water annually; for implementing practices that reduce pollution and waste; and for conserving energy and other resources.

We applaud this year's Pollution Prevention Award winners, and all businesses that make protecting the environment a top priority.



# The Simple Solution to Pet Poop Pollution

**W**e know they're cute. They're loyal and loving, and who can resist those adorable little faces? But there's another side to cuddly cats and dogs: the back side that produces poop pollution!

## From Your Lawn to the Bay

According to the EPA, pet waste is a significant cause of water pollution.

When left on the ground, pet waste can be washed by water from sprinklers and rain into gutters and storm drains. Storm drains in our area are not connected to the sewer system; they funnel water directly into creeks and the Bay without treatment.

In water, the bacteria in decaying pet waste consume oxygen and release ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia can be harmful to aquatic life. Pet waste

also contains nutrients that promote excessive weed and algae growth, making water cloudy, green, and unhealthy.

Perhaps most importantly, pet waste contains bacteria, viruses and parasites that can make water unsafe for swimming or drinking.

## The Solution Is As Simple as 1, 2, 3

It's easy to prevent pet poop from polluting our water environment. Just follow these three steps:

- ▶ **1. PICK IT UP**
- ▶ **2. PUT IT IN A BAG**
- ▶ **3. PUT IT IN THE TRASH (NEVER IN THE YARD WASTE OR COMPOST BINS)**

Landfills are designed to handle this type of waste.

## Can You Flush It?

Please do NOT flush pet waste.

- Our treatment plant was designed to serve the human population of central Contra Costa County, not accounting for pets. Right now there are nearly 470,000 people in our service area. We don't know the pet population, but if 50% of our customers have one pet, that's about 235,000 additional little (or big) poopers. If all that pet waste were to be flushed, it would put an additional load on our system and could make it more difficult for our treatment plant to treat the human waste for which it was designed.

- Please do not flush Flush Puppies® or other brands of "flushable" dog poop bags. They may be biodegradable, but that doesn't mean they

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*Whether you already have a furry family member or will be gaining one over the holidays, there's something you should know about its poop!*



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dissolve quickly in water (one manufacturer admits this can take up to 96 hours). Even though they go down your toilet, they can clog sewer pipes!

### What About Flushing Kitty Litter?

Typical kitty litter is made of clay. Clay mixed with water makes something close to cement which can clog your pipes. Even if it isn't made of clay, nearly all litter is designed to absorb liquid, and when that happens, the particles expand; your pipes don't. "Flushable" kitty litter may be more biodegradable, but can still clog your pipes. Sewer (and septic) systems aren't designed to handle kitty litter, no matter what it's made of.

Aside from the litter itself, what's in the litter – cat waste – may contain the *Toxoplasma gondii* parasite, which can survive the treatment process and kill marine mammals like sea otters. That's why all cat litter sold in California is required to have a label warning people not to flush it down the toilet.

Put the litter into a bag, seal it, and put it in the trash.

## Protect Water Quality: DO NOT Flush Your Drugs!

Do you have expired or unwanted medications? Protect your family, your community, and the environment by bringing them to a free drop-off site for safe disposal:



**Alamo (new)**  
Sheriff's Substation  
150 Alamo Plaza, Suite C

**Clayton**  
Police Dept.  
6000 Heritage Trail

**Concord**  
Police Dept.  
1350 Galindo St.

**Danville**  
Police Dept.  
510 La Gonda Way

**Martinez**  
• Police Dept.  
525 Henrietta St.

• Sheriff's Field Ops Bldg.  
1980 Muir Rd.  
• Contra Costa Med. Center  
Sheriff's Substation  
(check with deputy)  
2500 Alhambra Ave.

**Moraga**  
Police Dept.  
329 Rheem Blvd.

**Orinda**  
Police Dept.  
22 Orinda Way

**Pleasant Hill**  
Police Dept.  
330 Civic Dr.

**San Ramon**  
Police Dept.  
2401 Crow Canyon Rd.

**Walnut Creek**  
City Hall  
1666 North Main St.

To ensure privacy, transfer prescribed pills to a sealable plastic bag before depositing them. Leave liquids in original bottles (cross out personal information) and seal within a plastic bag to prevent spills.

**Do not put sharps or anything other than medications in the container!**

For more information, visit [www.centrialsan.org](http://www.centrialsan.org) or call 1-800-646-1431.

### Want to Be (Gasp!) Removed From Our Mailing List?

Could you please recycle this newsletter instead? Here's why:

1. Unsubscribing would not change the number of newsletters we print and mail. It would not conserve paper or other resources, and would not save money.
2. We are required by the Regional Water Quality Control Board to provide pollution prevention outreach to everyone in our service area. Many of our customers do not use email. Since we do not send bills and cannot do inserts as some utilities do, mailing a newsletter is the most economical way for us to fulfill this requirement.
3. We send the newsletter to 156,500 residential and business addresses within our service area. We minimize printing costs with an annual contract based on that number of copies of each issue.

4. We save money on postage and handling by sending the newsletter at a special presorted rate to every residential and business address in our service area, instead of sending it to individuals and maintaining an ever-changing mailing/emailing list. It is less expensive and less labor-intensive for us to do it this way.

5. If we removed your address from the mailing list, the next person to move into your location would not receive it.

That's why recycling this newsletter is the best option. We'll never send you more than three issues per year. We're sorry if this causes you any inconvenience, and thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Also, for your convenience each issue of *Pipeline* is posted on our website: [centrialsan.org/publications](http://centrialsan.org/publications)

# Is Sewer Construction Coming to Your Neighborhood? Here's What to Expect

The single largest asset of the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District is our sewer system, which consists of 1,500 miles of pipes and transports millions of gallons of wastewater every day to our treatment facility in Martinez.

Maintaining this huge system to ensure reliable service for our customers requires construction projects to renovate or replace aging pipes. Since these pipes spread throughout our entire service area, this activity is bound to have an impact on our residential and business customers.

Here's how we communicate with customers who are likely to be affected by the construction:

## Before Construction

- Nine-to-twelve months before construction activities begin, we mail letters notifying people of design activities that will be taking place in their area over the next several months. These activities include marking utility and sewer locations, surveying, and inspecting the area in order to draw up the best construction plan for the project.
- Once we have that plan, if work will be required within easements on private property, we contact those customers individually to discuss the construction and restoration activities.
- As the project nears the bidding phase, we invite all customers in the project area to a public meeting where we share our plan, answer questions, and discuss any issues of concern so we can make changes to the plan, if appropriate.
- Once the project is awarded to a contractor, we send another letter to all customers in the project area announcing when construction is expected to begin and end. A typical project can last six to nine months.
- As the project progresses, the contractor notifies customers one week in advance of any construction in their neighborhood.
- Signs are posted in the area which include the expected project duration and a contact number to call for more information.

## During Construction

- During construction, one of our inspectors will be on-site to monitor the project and ensure the contractor is meeting our specifications. This includes not only the specifics of pipe installation, but also safety, cleanliness, traffic control, and property restoration.
- Customers with questions or concerns about the project can approach the on-site inspector or call our Community Affairs Representative at (925) 229-7200.



► *Story continued on Page 7*

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## After Construction

- Once the project is complete, we send a survey to all customers in that area. This survey provides us with valuable feedback: people can make us aware of any issues that may have been overlooked, and let us know how they felt the project was handled. The questions cover the courtesy and responsiveness of staff, timeliness of notices, traffic impacts, and how promptly issues were resolved. Each item is rated on a scale of one to five, with five being outstanding. To date, we are maintaining an average four-plus rating for all aspects on all projects.

We understand that construction can cause inconveniences for our customers. We will continue to keep you informed of work in your neighborhood, and design projects to reduce the negative impacts where possible, all while maintaining a reliable and effective sewer system that protects public health and the environment.

## Curious About Sewer Construction?

Information about the various construction methods we use, including trenchless technologies, can be found in past issues of the *Pipeline* which are available at:

[www.centrialsan.org/publications](http://www.centrialsan.org/publications):

- **Why Pipe Bursting is Good for Sewers** – Summer 2013, page 7
- **A Really Big Boring Project** – Summer 2008, page 6
- **Trenchless Technologies Make Sewer Construction Less Disruptive** – Summer 2007, page 10
- **What Lies Beneath** – Fall 2006, page 2

## Infrastructure Improvements

The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District regularly maintains, repairs or replaces sewer lines and other elements of our 1,500-mile wastewater collection system to decrease the likelihood of failures and to ensure continuous, trouble-free service for our customers. We appreciate your support and realize that our projects cause short-term inconveniences, but they will provide long-term benefits for you and your neighbors.

Here's a brief summary of our major ongoing construction projects:

### Diablo/Danville

The **Diablo Sewer Renovation Project, Phase 2**, is renovating sewers in the Calle Arroyo, Clydesdale Drive, and Vista Del Diablo areas. Expected completion: Feb. 2014.

### Lafayette

The **Lafayette Sewer Renovation Project, Phase 8**, is renovating sewers in the Upper Happy Valley Road and South Peardale Drive areas. Expected completion: Feb. 2014.

### For more info...

For more information about these or other construction projects, please contact Community Affairs Representative Chris Carpenter at (925) 229-7200 or [ccarp@centrialsan.org](mailto:ccarp@centrialsan.org).

### On the web:

Detailed project maps are posted on our website, [www.centrialsan.org](http://www.centrialsan.org) (check the "Construction Zone" in the lower right of the home page).

## Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility

# How to Have a Safe Trip!

**A**re you planning to bring paint, batteries, bleach, cleansers, motor oil, pesticides, fluorescent bulbs or other items to our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility? First, think about that word, “hazardous.” Now think about the interior of your vehicle. Think about you being inside the vehicle with something hazardous... driving on roads shared by people who might be distracted.

Frightened? Don't be! The last thing we want to do is scare you away from using our facility!

But we DO want you to be careful about how you pack and transport the items you bring.

Here's how to SAFELY transport household hazardous waste to our facility:

**NOTE: State regulations limit the transportation of hazardous waste to 15 gallons or 125 pounds per trip, and individual containers are limited to 5-gallon capacity.**

- Get a cardboard box (or plastic bin) sturdy enough to support the weight of the contents. Reinforce the bottom of the cardboard box with tape.
- Line the box with a plastic garbage bag (to catch spills). Fold the flaps of the box inward, place the bag inside the box, and

drape it over the sides. Do NOT close the bag (our staff need to easily see what's inside).

- Make sure all items you'll be bringing to the facility have tightly closed lids. NEVER transport open containers!
- Keep items in their original packaging, if possible – especially with easily breakable items like fluorescent light bulbs. If you don't have the original packaging for fluorescent bulbs or tubes, wrap a rubber band around them to keep them from rolling around in your vehicle.
- If an item is leaking, seal it within a ziploc-style plastic bag.
- Place the items inside the lined box, ensuring containers remain upright.
- Pack mercury-containing items (fever thermometers, thermostats, fluorescent light bulbs) carefully and keep them separate from other items that might break them if jostled.
- Put the box in your trunk or truck bed – never inside the passenger cabin. Secure the box to prevent movement.
- Drive to the facility and let our friendly staff remove your items while you remain comfortable inside your vehicle.

It really is worth the effort to properly pack and bring your household hazardous waste to our facility because it helps to keep harmful materials out of our local waters and landfills.



There is no drop-off fee and no appointment necessary for residents of central Contra Costa County. Small businesses require an appointment and are charged a nominal fee.

Please call 1-800-646-1431 for more information.

**More HHW facts on the next page ►**

*Pack your items carefully before transporting them to the facility. A step-by-step video is on our YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/centralsandist](http://www.youtube.com/centralsandist)*

# Transportation Tribulations

Here are a couple of tricky situations our employees faced when people weren't careful enough.

## Mercury Mayhem!

A customer arrived at the facility with liquid mercury leaking from the back of her truck. Apparently the lid of the container it was in had come off.

Mercury is highly toxic, so our staff had to call out the County Hazardous Materials Response Team to clean up the spill in the back of the truck before it could be driven again.

We had to turn away 57 customers during the 90 minutes our facility was closed while the mercury was cleaned up and safely contained.

## Believe It Ore Not!

A customer brought in several items, among them a coffee can containing household batteries and a rock-shaped item wrapped in aluminum foil. By the time this was discovered, the customer had left. Something didn't seem right, so one of our staff grabbed a Geiger counter

while the others kept a safe distance, and took a reading of the mysterious object. The reading went off the scale!

Radioactive items are not knowingly accepted at the HHW Facility.

Our staff got the lead out (literally)! The facility sometimes receives ceramic pottery glaze or other items that have low levels of radioactivity. That's why there is a Geiger counter and lead kept on hand. Our staff packed lead around the mystery rock, isolated it in the back of the facility, and contacted a radioactive materials expert with the California Department of Public Health. The specialist identified the item as uranium ore. He put it in a special lead-lined container and took it away with him for safe disposal.

Thankfully, the facility was not contaminated and no one was exposed to potentially harmful radiation thanks to the quick actions of our team.

## Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility

4797 Imhoff Place, Martinez, CA 94553-4392



- From Hwy. 4 take the Solano Way exit.
- From I-680 take Hwy. 4 East to Solano Way exit.

### Eligible Communities

Alamo, Blackhawk, Clayton, Concord, Clyde, Danville, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Orinda, Pacheco, Pleasant Hill, San Ramon, Walnut Creek and unincorporated Central County areas.

### HOURS

**Residents:** Monday – Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
(Reuse Room closes at 3:30 p.m.)

**Businesses:** Monday – Saturday, *by appointment only*

**Holiday Schedule:** Closed: Dec. 24 – Jan. 1, 2014

**1-800-646-1431**



# Flush Only Human Waste and Toilet Paper Wipes Clog Pipes

**D**isposable wipes of all kinds are exploding in popularity – and wreaking havoc on sewer systems!

Many consumers use disposable wipes because they're convenient for cleaning and disinfecting. Even people who would not normally embrace disposable products because of concern for overburdened landfills are using wipes that are being marketed as "flushable." Instead of tossing them in the trash, people flush them down the toilet, believing they've done the right thing.



## "Flushable" Wipes Should NOT be Flushed

The "flushable" label means they will go down your toilet when flushed. What you should be concerned about is what can happen next.

Disposable wipes do not disintegrate quickly in water like toilet paper does. Consumer Reports® tested several brands of wipes labeled "flushable" and found that while toilet paper disintegrated after about eight seconds, the wipes still hadn't broken down after 30 minutes.

These products stay largely intact as they travel through sewer pipes and can easily get caught on roots or other debris, increasing the risk of clogs in your pipes and sewage overflows in your home or the street.

As the use of disposable wipes grows, we are being forced to commit significant resources to remove them from our sewer lines, pumps, and treatment plant facilities, and to repair or replace the equipment they damage.

Disposable wipes are an even greater threat to your home's sewer pipe, which is smaller and more easily clogged.

In addition to potentially causing clogs and overflows, many of the cleaning and disinfecting wipes contain chemicals that are difficult for sewer treatment processes to remove, and they can thus pollute local waters.

***If you use disposable cleaning/disinfecting wipes, moist towelettes, baby wipes, personal hygiene wipes or similar disposable or so-called "flushable" products, please put them in the trash, never in your toilet.***

Flush only human waste and toilet paper, regardless of what a product label says.

## Need a Speaker for Your Group?

If your group would like to hear about Central San and our pollution prevention efforts, please call (925) 335-7702 and leave a message about your event. We'll do our best to provide a speaker free of charge.

## Treatment Plant Tours

We offer free tours for groups of students (grade 6 and up) and adults who would like to see how Central San's award-winning treatment plant makes wastewater safe for the environment. Call Kit Ohlman at (925) 229-7329.

# Tips for a Trouble-Free Season



## Your Cozy Fire Could Be Causing Air *and* Water Pollution

**B**urning wood, wrapping paper and other items in your fireplace can create smoke full of carbon monoxide, benzene, formaldehyde, and dioxin. These toxic elements not only pollute our air, they also pollute local waters. Tiny particles within smoke eventually settle. They land in local waters, and on surfaces from which irrigation or rainwater runoff washes them into storm drains that funnel the water, untreated, into the bay.

Dioxin (a byproduct of incineration) is of particular concern because it has been characterized by the Environmental Protection Agency as a likely human carcinogen that increases the risk of cancer.

Here are ways you can help to reduce dioxin and other pollutants in the environment:

- Never burn wrapping paper, painted wood, particle board, plastics, Styrofoam or other trash.
- Switch from a traditional wood-burning fireplace

to a natural-gas device, an EPA-certified wood stove, or a pellet stove to reduce emissions.

- Burn manufactured logs instead of wood in your fireplace. They burn cleaner, with substantially lower emissions of dioxin and other pollutants. *Note: Follow instructions on the logs; some are not suitable for wood stoves or fireplace inserts.*
- If you burn wood, make sure it is completely dry. Wet wood burns less efficiently and causes more pollution.
- Keep your fireplace or stove well maintained to improve air flow and reduce emissions.

While a crackling fire can be especially romantic during the holidays, always check for Spare the Air alerts. You could be fined for burning on a Spare the Air day.

## Holiday Cooking: “I’m Stuffed!” Says Your Sewer Pipe

**D**uring the holiday season when people tend to prepare elaborate meals, deep-fry turkeys, and invite more family and friends into their homes and kitchens, the amount of grease, oil and fat going down sinks and entering the sewer system increases dramatically. It’s the busiest time of year for plumbers.

Grease is a major cause of sewer clogs and overflows.

We’re sure YOU know better than to put grease or fat-laden food scraps down your drain or garbage disposal, but what about that helpful relative volunteering to do the dishes?

When cooking byproducts go down your sink, the grease, oil and fat can cling to the inside of the sewer pipe and accumulate over time. This can create a clog that might cause sewage to back up and overflow inside your home or in the street.

Here are a few things you can do to prevent such a mess from ruining your holidays (make sure well-meaning helpers know these, too):

- Keep all grease, oil, fats and fatty foods out of the sink and garbage disposal.

- Put grease, oil and fats in a lidded container; mix in an absorbent material (like kitty litter or used coffee grounds); seal and put it in the trash.
- If you soak greasy items in soapy water before washing them, place a paper towel over the drain to catch grease and food particles as you pour out the water.
- Bring large quantities of grease and used cooking oil (such as from a turkey fryer) to our Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility for recycling into biofuels.

### Grease + Wipes = Huge “Fatberg”

A 15-ton “fatberg” was removed from London sewers earlier this year! The largest mass in London sewer history (as big as a bus), it was a nasty combination of grease and flushed wipes. If it hadn’t been discovered and removed in time, officials said, “We could have had sewage popping out of manholes all over London!”

## About CCCSD

Our mission as a Special District is to protect public health and the environment. We do this by collecting and treating wastewater, providing recycled water, and promoting pollution prevention. Our treatment plant in Martinez collects, treats, and disinfects an average of 45 million gallons of wastewater every day. Some treated wastewater is recycled (treated further) for irrigation use on golf courses and parks; the rest is released into Suisun Bay. We also operate a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility and sponsor 12 collection sites for the safe disposal of pharmaceuticals.



## Where to Call...

General information	(925) 228-9500 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>
Sewer overflows	(925) 933-0955 or 933-0990
Treatment Plant InfoLine (Report Odors)	(925) 335-7703
Household Hazardous Waste InfoLine	(800) 646-1431
Sewer connection permits/Permit Counter	(925) 229-7371
To report illegal discharges into sewer system	(925) 229-7288 (during business hours) (925) 229-7214 (after hours)
Source Control	(925) 229-7288
Job Hotline	(925) 229-7109 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>
Student Education Programs	(925) 229-7310 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>
Public InfoLine	(925) 335-7702 or <a href="http://www.centralsan.org">www.centralsan.org</a>

**CCCSD serves 467,500 customers within its 144-square-mile service area.**

-  Wastewater collection & treatment; Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) disposal for 332,600 people.
-  Wastewater treatment and HHW disposal for 134,900 people in Concord and Clayton by contract.
-  HHW disposal only.
-  CCCSD's headquarters, treatment plant, and HHW Collection Facility are located in Martinez.

### The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District PIPELINE

Written and designed by CCCSD to communicate pollution prevention messages to the people and communities we serve

**Michael Scahill**, Editor • **Bonnie Lowe**, Writer  
**Charles Waltmire**, Graphic Designer

View archived issues online at [www.centralsan.org](http://www.centralsan.org)

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Board meetings are open to the public and are held on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 2 p.m. in the CCCSD Board Room, 5019 Imhoff Place, Martinez.

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