

Rescuers hike all night to bring back 300-pound man

By CHRIS COUNTS

AFTER RECEIVING word that a hiker was in need of help near Sykes Hot Springs in the Big Sur backcountry early Sunday evening, two search and rescue teams swung into action and embarked on a 13-hour journey through stormy weather to reach the man and bring him back.

“Search and rescue teams were notified at about 8 p.m. on Sunday of a 20-year-old hiker who needed help and could not make it out on his own,” the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office reported. “Thanks to the assistance of other hikers in the area, an SOS rescue signal was sent out and emergency notification was made to 911.”

The report didn’t say what the hiker was suffering from or who he is, but an Instagram post by the team reported that he “fell ill and became too weak to hike out.” It also noted that he weighs 300 pounds.

The river rises

The rescue workers, who included members of the Monterey County Sheriff’s search and rescue team, the county’s urban search and rescue team, and Cal Fire, set out on foot. The report didn’t say what route they took, but it would have taken hours to reach the hiker, who they found near the hot springs before daybreak.

The initial plan called for airlifting the man by helicopter, but stormy weather made that unsafe.

“The patient was provided first aid, but due to weather conditions, helicopters were unable to assist,” the report indicated.

They placed the hiker on a specially designed gurney

with one wheel. Resigned to hiking him out, the rescue workers began an arduous trek back to civilization, but they faced an unexpected hurdle.

“While returning, rescue teams became stranded and were unable to cross a river where water levels had risen,”

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A dozen workers carry an injured hiker across the Big Sur River early Monday morning.

Homeowner, city face off over metal roof

By MARY SCHLEY

WHEN BRANDI Faia learned last March that her insurance company would no longer cover her ranch-style home at the northeast corner of Torres and Second



PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

An example of a modern home with a vertical-panel metal roof — a style that was rejected for one Carmel home by the planning commission last month.

because it’s in a high-fire-risk area and has a deteriorating wood shake roof, she decided to replace it with one made of metal panels running vertically from peak to eave. But that solution — which she said was suggested by her insurance agent — has been a nonstarter with the Carmel Planning Commission, which first told her to pursue a horizontal-panel metal roof and then last month decided she should install metal shingles or some other fireproof product instead.

Some already approved

At their Dec. 11, 2024, meeting, commissioners acknowledged they have approved metal roofs with vertical seams in the past, even though the city’s design guidelines state that metal roofs are inappropriate in all contexts, but they decided it would be wrong for Faia’s house.

Two months earlier, commissioners had approved Faia’s application for various updates to her aging home, including a new fence, windows and other repairs, but

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FEARING FAST FOOD, COMMISSION PUTS OFF VOTE ON ‘BIG SQUEEZY’

By MARY SCHLEY

MAD DOGS & Englishmen bike shop can sell coffee and pastries out of its Ocean Avenue location, and members of a prominent local restaurant family can open a crepe shop in a former liquor store on San Carlos, the Carmel Planning Commission decided last month. But the man who wants to operate a juice and smoothie spot on Lincoln Street must prove his business isn’t a chain before commissioners will let him proceed.

The Big Squeezy, owned by Ash Shoukry, has a location in the Crossroads shopping center, and he wants to open another in the space next to the former Cottage restaurant that was previously occupied by an art gallery. Patrice Pastor’s Esperanza Carmel owns the building.

At the Dec. 11, 2024, meeting, associate planner Jacob

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Bye-bye, Shell — there’s a new Chevron in town

By MARY SCHLEY

WITH THE new owner’s promise to donate three wooden Shell signs to the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea’s historical archives, the gas station at San Carlos and Fifth quietly became a Chevron this week. HASCO Holdings LLC, which purchased the station from racecar driver Mario Andretti’s company in March 2024 for \$9,822,500, received approval last month to make the switch and installed some of the new signs Monday.

According to the Dec. 13, 2024, permit issued to Brian Collins of Calcraft Corporation — which handles branding for petroleum companies and other large corporations — the old sign hanging over the planter at the corner and the two channel-letter signs over the pumps and on the side of the building are being deeded to the city to be put in the Harrison Memorial Library History Room.

Only in Carmel?

The permit also authorized the contractor to replace all the Shell signage with Chevron equivalents made from metal or wood and acknowledged the decals on the pumps themselves would be swapped out as well.

The brand change brings Chevron back to the city after more than 15 years, when fuel station owner Andy Hill parted ways with the supplier to replace it with Alliance. (Many longtime residents still refer to his place at Junipero and Fourth as “the Carmel Chevron.”)

MPWMD: Water moratorium to end

■ Cities to get hefty new supplies

By KELLY NIX

THE WATER district’s New Year’s resolution is to bring plenty of water for new housing and commercial development, and the head of the agency said that will happen within months.

Monterey Peninsula Water Management District general manager Dave Stoldt said that expansion of its wastewater reclamation project, dubbed Pure Water Monterey, is expected to come online toward the end of 2025. It will provide 2,250 acre-feet of new water for communities that have been under a moratorium for decades.

The project “will expand the recycled water supply on the Peninsula to over 50 percent of existing customer demand and will provide for new housing and jobs,” Stoldt said last week.

When it starts production, the expansion of Pure Water Monterey will provide a total of 5,750 acre-feet, or about 1.8 billion gallons, of purified wastewater annually. Stoldt has promised it will be enough to supply the Peninsula for a quarter-century for all its needs — a statement Peninsula water provider California American Water disputes.

In any case, while the new water is not yet flowing from the taps, Stoldt said his agency is in the process of allocating a portion of it to each Peninsula city and in some unincorporated areas of the county.

“Because each city is a different size and will grow at a different rate, their future needs will be different,” he explained. “Hence, the allocations of water will vary for each.”

Online by end of year

The allocations, available in March, will help with home remodels and additions where existing water meters are present. The district is expected to adopt an ordinance that same month to allow the allocations.

A draft of the ordinance, Stoldt explained, says cities, unincorporated parts of the county and other jurisdictions that will get new water should only start allocating it to projects that won’t be completed before Dec. 31, 2025.

“That is, we have told the jurisdictions that we prefer all projects to wait until the Pure Water Monterey Expansion

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Getting to that point took some time and marks a significant change for the corner station, which has offered Shell products for more than 60 years.

Designed for Shell Oil Co. by the architecture firm of Burde, Shaw & Associates — which also created the plans for the former bank at Seventh and Dolores and the

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PHOTO/IAN MARTIN

As part of a switch from Shell to Chevron, workers remove a hand-carved sign from the gas station at San Carlos and Fifth.