

## LODE WATER DISTRICT FINALLY GETS COMFY

By ***Dana M. Nichols***

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SAN ANDREAS - During heavy storms in 2006, John Gomes remembers using a Shop Vac attached to a timer to pump floodwater out of the basement that housed Calaveras County Water District's computer servers.

And that was just one of many ways that Gomes, information technology director for the district, and other employees had to adapt to the limitations of a dilapidated headquarters building.

That building on Highway 49 in San Andreas suffered from narrow stairways and hallways, limited parking, and so little space that the district had to rent storage lockers for filing cabinets and house essential functions, including operations and the district boardroom, in flimsy modular structures.

So Gomes and many other district staffers are smiling this week as they settle into a new 14,000-square foot headquarters completed this summer.

"It's not going to get flooded," Gomes said as he worked on wiring in a room that houses computer servers that handle everything from engineering to billing for the district.

There are some details still to be completed. The sound system still needs to be hooked up before the first district board meeting is held at the new site, which is scheduled for Wednesday. And a new flagpole will soon be erected next to the parking lot entrance on Toma Court just off George Reed Drive.

"Our last building didn't have a flagpole, and I think public buildings should have flagpoles," said Mitch Dion, the district's general manager.

The building cost about \$2.3 million to build.

Employees moved in over the past month. The change is still so new that some customers have a hard time finding the place, and employees not used to spacious digs can have a hard time finding each other, water district workers said.

The change does have at least one drawback: The headquarters is no longer close to a number of San Andreas restaurants, said Larry Diamond, assistant to the general manager.

"The downside is I can't walk across the street for Chinese food," Diamond said.

Still, after 23 years working in the former headquarters building, Diamond said he's happy with the change.

"This is a pretty comfortable space," he said.

Perhaps more important than comfort to district administrators is that all employees are, for the first time, under the same roof, and that the building is not yet full.

The district currently has 63 employees and provides service to 12,500 customers for water and 4,500 customers for sewer.

Those numbers are expected to increase as the county adds population in coming decades.

"It is nice to have a building that is not only functional, but one you can grow with," said Jeffrey Meyer, the district's director of finance.

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### **Where is it?**

The new headquarters building for Calaveras County Water District is at 120 Toma Court, but it also is clearly visible from George Reed Drive directly across from The Resource Connection Food Bank. George Reed Drive comes off of Pool Station Road just south of Church Hill Road in San Andreas.

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