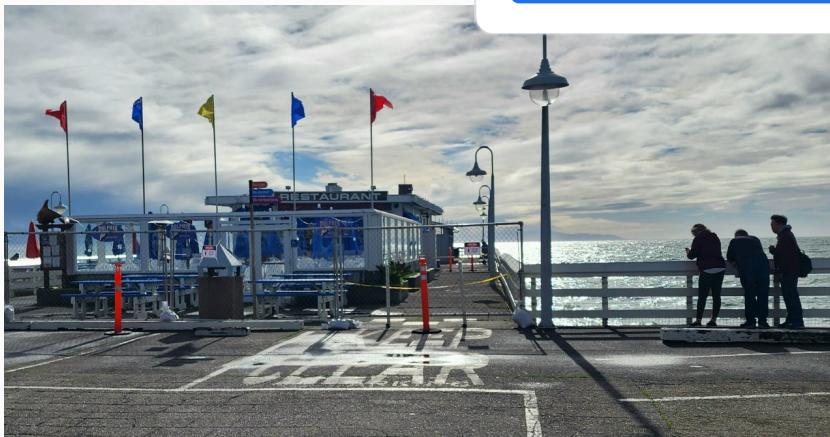


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Wharf and city beaches closed until the afternoon



Due to damage sustained from intense wave action Thursday, the end portion of the Santa Cruz Wharf, including the Dolphin restaurant and viewing holes will be closed to the public for the foreseeable future. (Aric Sleeper/Santa Cruz Sentinel)



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PUBLISHED: December 29, 2023 at 4:24 p.m. |

UPDATED: December 29, 2023 at 5:22 p.m.



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SANTA CRUZ – Massive waves barraged the coastline Thursday causing the city of Santa Cruz to close the Santa Cruz Wharf and multiple beaches. Although the Wharf reopened to the public Friday morning, the viewing holes and Dolphin restaurant at the end of the wooden structure will remain closed until further notice.

“With the high swell and the high tides, the waves came in and took out about six to eight of the pilings,” said Santa Cruz Wharf Service Field Crew Leader Patrick Mason. “There are some structural issues and the fire sprinkler system out there was also damaged. The fire suppression on the wharf is made up of zones and this zone is out. We shut the gas off to the restaurant and this won’t be open to the public until repairs can be made.”



The damage it sustained Thursday will have to be repaired before the Wharf’s end can be reopened to the public. (Aric Sleeper/Santa Cruz Sentinel)

Mason added that there is no ballpark time frame for repairing the structure until crews can get boats in the water to fully assess the wharf’s underside, and the structure’s end will remain off limits to the public for the foreseeable future. However, the rest of it will remain open to the public barring more damage Saturday, when the entire wharf is also scheduled to be closed to the public until the afternoon due to another round of big swells and high,

high tide predicted to beat up the coast Saturday morning.

"We want to keep the wharf open for the public and for the businesses," said Mason. "We also want everybody to be safe."

Although the coastline along West Cliff Drive took a pounding Thursday and portions of the road were closed off even to pedestrian traffic that day, the yet unfinished infill walls being built as a result of last winter's storms remained intact and undamaged despite the erosive wave action.

"We saw minimal issues," said Santa Cruz Assistant Public Works Director Kevin Crossley. "We cleaned up this morning and are preparing for round two tomorrow (Saturday). Overall, I'm pleased with how the repairs performed despite being partially complete."

Due
to
the
high
swell



Despite a barrage of intense waves Thursday, the construction sites on West Cliff Drive held up to the storm. (Aric Sleeper/Santa Cruz Sentinel)

predicted for Saturday morning, the portion of West Cliff Drive from Columbia to David Way will be closed again to pedestrians Saturday, at least until the tide lowers in the afternoon. In addition to the closure of the wharf and city beaches such as Main Beach, Cowell Beach and Its Beach, among others.

Because visitors did not heed the warnings issued by multiple agencies to steer clear of the coast on Thursday during the high swell and tide, and instead flocked to West Cliff Drive by the hundreds, the vehicle gridlock on the scenic roadway prevented emergency responders from being able to effectively do their jobs.

Santa Cruz Fire Department Marine Safety Capt. Brian Thomas stressed that people should stay away from the coast during the high surf event predicted for Saturday.

“Tomorrow’s going to be kind of a repeat,” said Thomas. “It’s going to be a little bit smaller but it might draw more people to the water, which is kind of the concern. We ask that people don’t go down there at high tide.”

Thomas mentioned that portions of West Cliff Drive were closed Thursday to prevent people from being hit by rocks and sea debris being thrown up on the road by the wave action alongside the waves themselves.



“The

The Bethany Curve culvert took a beating from the massive waves that barraged the coast Thursday. The structure is scheduled to be repaired this spring. (Aric Sleeper/Santa Cruz Sentinel)

water that’s splashing up,” said Thomas, “It looks great on your TikTok video but it carries rocks and wood in it.”

Thomas stressed that the presence of guard rails on West Cliff Drive does not mean that an area is a risk-free vantage point during extreme weather and high wave events.

“Stand back from that guardrail,” said Thomas. “Give yourself some distance and like always, don’t turn your back on the ocean.”

He again stressed that drivers stopping in the roadway and driving slowly prevents emergency responders from getting to an injured or dying person or people.

“Be mindful of the impacts you’re having on everybody else around you,” said Thomas. “It gets really tough when we’re all looking and watching and basically making the streets dead-stopped.”

National Weather Service Lead Forecaster Roger Gass also stressed that people should stay away from the coast Saturday until the tide recedes and the storm subsides, which he predicts will occur Saturday afternoon.

“We are upgrading the high surf advisory to a warning through tomorrow,” said Gass. “We are expecting wave heights of 28 to 33 feet and up to 40 feet high in some locations until about 2 p.m. Saturday. People should not be approaching the coast. They should stay well away from the ocean. Don’t put yourselves in harm’s way.”

Sentinel reporter Jessica A. York contributed to this report.

Forecast

Saturday: Lingering rain showers will be possible through the morning Saturday and will taper off into the afternoon. High near 60 degrees and winds between 6 and 9 mph.

Sunday: A 50% chance of rain, mainly after 10am. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 58 degrees. Southeast wind from 5 mph to 8 mph.

Monday: Sunny, with a high near 60 degrees. Partly cloudy, with a low around 42 degrees.

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