Office of the City Manager

November 18, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Re: El Niño 26-27 Storm Season Update: November 18 Storm Response & Impacts

Today's heavy rain and strong winds caused significant flooding, fallen trees, power outages, and water intrusion at businesses and City facilities. By the mid-afternoon, Berkeley had received 2.54 inches of rain. Throughout the day, City staff worked through the EOC structure and in the field with Caltrans, CHP, and PG&E to address immediate hazards, assist people affected by flooding, and maintain City services.

Key activities and impacts are summarized below.

Response Staffing and Public Assistance
Public Works had received 100 calls for service by 1:00 p.m. and reported distributing more than 400 sandbags to Berkeley community members during the day. Fire department personnel normally assigned to administrative duties were moved into field response roles to help manage increased demand and prioritize incidents requiring an immediate emergency response.

Ashby Underpass
The Ashby underpass (leading to and from I-80) flooded, leading to Fire personnel crews rescued two people stuck there; a third person self-rescued after firefighters arrived. The Ashby underpass eastbound and westbound I-80 offramps at Ashby remained closed at the latest update. Public Works and Caltrans were working to remove water, with CHP also on scene.

West Berkeley Flooding
Businesses on both sides of the railroad tracks near Gilman Street experienced extensive flooding, requiring road closures, Public Works response, and towing of a flooded vehicle. Water was reported receding around noon, and Gilman Street between Fourth Street and west of Third Street reopened during the afternoon.

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Codornices Creek flooding affected Second Street. The Transfer Station remained operational despite flooding at its entrance and Equipment Maintenance Shop. The Recycling Center did not flood.

Aquatic Park and Bolivar Drive flooded. No flooding was reported inside the four identified City tenant buildings along Bolivar Drive, although they remained a concern.

At the Waterfront, several DoubleTree Hotel rooms flooded from water backing up through a storm drain. At the Marina, waves overtopped the South Cove seawall during the morning's peak winds, and staff secured two boats whose dock lines had broken.

Trees and power outages
Forestry crews responded to fallen City and private trees and branches throughout Berkeley. By 3:45 p.m., PRW-Forestry reported that the identified tree hazards had been made safe and affected public rights of way reopened. Nearly 200 PG&E customers near Ashby Avenue between Acton Street and San Pablo Avenue were without power, with additional smaller outages elsewhere.

City Facilities
Portions of Fire Headquarters flooded, including the east parking area and offices and conference rooms along the eastern side of the building. Most standing water in the parking area had been pumped out by the afternoon. Drain investigation, carpet removal, and drying were underway. Public Works also responded to roof leaks and drainage problems at several other City facilities, including the City Attorney's Office, City Manager's side of the 5th floor at 2180 Milvia and Animal Shelter.

Public Messaging
Police issued a Nixle alert directing people away from the flooded Ashby area, Alameda County distributed flood warning information through AC Alert, and City Communications shared winter preparedness information and guidance on reporting storm problems.

These reports provide a preliminary picture. The full extent of damage and service impacts is still being assessed. Additional updates will be forthcoming as conditions change and more is known.

cc:
David White, Deputy City Manager
Jenny Wong, City Auditor
Farimah Brown, City Attorney
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager
Jamie Parks, Director of Public Works
Scott Ferris, Director of Parks, Recreation and Waterfront

David Sprague, Fire Chief
Jen Louis, Police Chief
Sarah Lana, Emergency Manager