

4thQUARTER
of 2026

A Quarterly Newsletter brought to you by the collaborative efforts of:

- Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company
- Pauma Valley Roadway Association
- Pauma Valley Community Services District
- With special thanks to our guest author, Mrs. Shari Crall

September 10th, 20269th Early Special Edition

Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company

We are in the midst of our annual budget process at Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company. As always, we began the budget process in July, shortly after the July billings were mailed. The process started with a review of our cost of service model that was graciously developed by a community resident at no charge to RPMWC. The underline assumptions of for development of the FY 2026 - 2027 budget are: projecting lower water sales due to the expected heavy rain throughout the Winter and early Spring due to the historic El Niño formation in the Pacific. 2) increasing cost of operation and 3) a focus on Cap-EX needs to address the aging infrastructure here in the community. Specifically, we are budgeting over \$200,000 in valve replacement work, but most importantly a replacement of approximately 20 copper service laterals. As you may have noticed, a number of service laterals have failed this past year, leading to costly and disruptive repairs. We hope to be on a regular lateral replacement schedule by the end of the fiscal year. We expect to be working with the PV Roadway Association and the PVCSD to coordinate the projects.

The budget also provides for needed changes to the depreciation policy and continues to set aside surplus to address future needs. The draft budget will be considered at the regular meetings of the RPWC board of directors on September 21.

Chuck Bandy, Board President



Pauma Valley Community Newsletter

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25th Anniversary of September 11th: America's Finest in its Darkest Hours

By Shari Crall

Twenty-five years ago, strapped into a fold-down seat on a C-5 transport plane at 9 p.m., Mike Esparza of Pauma Valley wondered: Was the country at war? Would there be more attacks? Even chemical attacks? Was his family in danger living so close to a military base? When would he see his family again? Would he see his family again?

It was September 11, 2001, and the pilot addressed the first responders on board. He told them that they and their escort were the only planes in the sky over these United States and that he was honored to be transporting them.

Mike said, "It was very strange for me to think of a military person doing this for us. . . . It was a very unique thing, just a surreal experience."

On that memorable day, Mike was a Battalion Chief for the Riverside City Fire Department and a volunteer member of California Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 6. Earlier that morning, he was finishing a 24-hour shift when his captain called and told him to turn on the television.

Tammy, his wife, also had the television on. "Good Morning America" was playing in the background while she got their boys, 10 and 12 years old, off to school. Shortly after witnessing the first plane crash into the World Trade Center, Mike called Tammy and said, "We may be deployed." Minutes later, he called back: "We're definitely deploying."

Mobilizing the 56-member team of search dogs, doctors, structural engineers, rescue specialists, and safety officers began immediately according to a well-practiced protocol. Military reserve planes were to transport the team, but as the day progressed, the military was unsure whether it could release that equipment. America might need all available military planes for whatever was coming next.

Tammy had picked her boys up from school and hurried to March Air Reserve Base, determined that they would at least

see Mike's plane take off. They waited five hours as complicated arrangements were made amid confusing circumstances.

It was evening when, suddenly, the entire base went black—a precaution to protect the plane during takeoff. Tammy and their boys watched as the C-5 finally taxied down the runway.

"They had a fighter escort," Tammy said. "Try to wrap your head around that. Your husband's in an airplane with a military escort in a military plane. I was so proud . . . and then I burst into tears because I realized I might never see him again." An unknown woman who was also watching nearby came over and hugged her.

We use the word "disaster" so often that it is hard to comprehend what a disaster really is until you are in one. As Mike's team landed in New York at dawn on September 12, they faced the challenges of integrating with the FDNY—which had experienced devastating leadership losses and incredible trauma—setting up a base of operations, and finding ways to be of service. Thick ash and smoke were everywhere.

Everyone scrambled to fulfill their specialized roles. Mike was a communications specialist. After finding viable antenna locations, he stood at the pile, ensuring critical radio contact with the search-and-rescue specialists who were navigating shifting debris and rubble. As the days progressed, their early hope disappeared. Instead of conducting rescues, the team realized they were there for recovery operations.

When a firefighter, police officer, or Port Authority officer was found, the teams stopped to pay tribute. It was becoming apparent that there were no survivors.

Mike also witnessed panic when a nearby building was believed to be collapsing. Mike said his reaction was to evaluate the situation and obtain more information, but "firefighters ran, rushing through windows and doors. Clearly, this wasn't your normal reaction." "This was trauma," Mike said, and he realized

Pauma Valley Roadway Association

2026 Roadway Paving

The Pauma Valley Roadway Association paving for 2026 is now complete. The new paving was done from the back gate to almost Cahuka Court. Many thanks to all for their patience and understanding during this project. Road closures and disruption are always difficult, but all went well.

Speed Reminder

Please maintain a speed of no more than 25 MPH when driving in our Pauma Valley community. We have many walkers on our roads and we want everyone to be safe.

Vegetation Trimming

It's important that all homeowners keep their vegetation trimmed back from the roadway. This practice not only improves visibility and safety on our roads, but also keeps roots and plant material from damaging the pavement.

Contact Information

Please remember that it's the responsibility of each PVRA homeowner to ensure that their contact information is kept up to date with our management company, Mauzy Management. This includes e-mail addresses. Your contact information is used for billing as well as general communications, such as upcoming roadwork. To facilitate this process Mauzy will be sending an update request form to each PVRA member of record. Please take the time to complete this form and return it to Mauzy.

Allen Koo, Board President

"25th Anniversary of September 11th: America's Finest in its Darkest Hours" Continued...



Mike Esparza (far right) stands with fellow members of California Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 6 at Ground Zero.



Mike Esparza rides in a military Humvee en route to the pile at Ground Zero.



The Esparza family: Tammy, Mike, Darin and Austin.

the impact the towers' collapse had on the New York firefighters.

Tammy was watching live television as reporters announced the possible collapse. Terrified, she watched the helmeted workers on the pile scramble to safety. Which one was Mike, she wondered, thinking, "Am I about to watch my husband die on live television?"

Thankfully, another collapse did not occur.

Tammy had constant visitors and faced endless questions as she tried to keep life normal for their two young boys. "We definitely had to be strong for our kids. For me, it was terrifying, but I didn't want to alarm our sons. They knew it was huge because everybody was talking about it and everybody was asking us questions... about what was going on with Mike."

This was life before smartphones, and phone access was very limited—Mike had to wait in line to use a shared phone. Tammy said her greatest need was information. Using dial-up internet and the relatively new technology of email, Tammy organized an email network for all Task Force 6 spouses. If anyone heard anything, they shared it, and the daily updates became a source of emotional support and encouragement.

"It became our lifeline," Tammy said. "I treasured every message."

Mike's emails revealed exhaustion, depression, sleep deprivation, and the smell of death. The team was digging and digging, finding bodies, but there were no

successful rescues.

"We weren't winning," Mike remembered.

The emotional toll was severe. "Firefighters are action-oriented," Mike said. "We push our feelings aside." However, this experience was so extreme that many sought mental health services in the aftermath. Long-term health effects have also been a challenge, particularly respiratory damage. Many needed workers' compensation or were forced into early retirement.

"They brought us closer together."

Tammy Esparza

Tammy described her relief when she received news that the team was demobilizing. "They're sleep-deprived, they're exposed, they're depressed, they're defeated," Tammy remembered thinking. "This is horrifying in every way, but they're going to be okay."

Ten days after deploying, the task force took a commercial flight home. Families gathered, and the media was everywhere. When Mike got off the plane, Tammy said, "He melted into my arms."

Both Mike and Tammy described extraordinary acts of kindness: Americans lining the roads and thanking responders, homemade lunches, water being handed out, support for families, and military personnel expressing their gratitude.

Mike was able to meet President George W. Bush when he visited Ground Zero to personally encourage responders. Tammy

and Mike want us to **remember** how Americans united afterward. "If we could somehow return to that spirit of kindness and common purpose," Mike said.

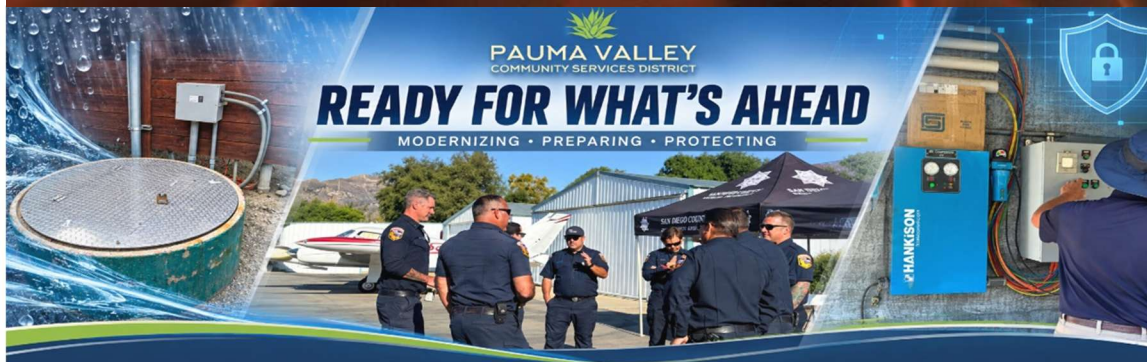
Tammy said the terrorists intended to divide America, but instead, "They brought us closer together." Mike and Tammy had a front-row seat to the extraordinary compassion of which communities are capable and the hope and unity that can emerge from tragedy. For them, the lasting lessons of September 11 are the unseen sacrifices of first-responder families; that disaster is far more complex than most people realize; that heroism is not defined by a successful rescue; and that trauma extends far beyond the disaster scene.

This September 11, may we pause—just as the workers did on the pile during those early days—to pay tribute and remember our shared values and the better impulses that unite us as Americans.



During a return to New York City for firefighters' funerals, Mike holds a community-made cross honoring the 343 firefighters lost on September 11.

A very Special thanks to our Guest Writer, Mrs. Shari Crall!



From the General Manager's Desk

The District continues to modernize operations while preparing for the months ahead.

We recently transitioned accounting software to its online version after support for the prior system ended. The change caused minor invoicing issues, which staff resolved. The new platform gives staff secure access wherever needed, helping us administer the District more efficiently and maintain service continuity.

NOAA reports that El Niño is strengthening as fall and winter approach. Although no seasonal outlook can guarantee local rainfall, now is the time to review drainage facilities on your property and schedule needed maintenance before winter. Please report any storm drain that appears blocked, damaged, or otherwise concerning to PVCSD. Not every storm drain within the Pauma Valley Country Club Estates is owned or maintained by

the District, but when in doubt, reporting the issue is the best course of action.

We have also made it through another heat wave. Please continue to stay hydrated, watch for heat-related illness, and report snakes to the District so trained staff can respond and safely remove them.

Please join us for the **Community Airpark Open House and Safety Fair on November 7th from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.** The event will feature aircraft, including antique airplanes, local safety-service displays, and lunch. We hope you can spend part of the day with us.

The District's \$244,000 cybersecurity grant is funding a modern SCADA monitoring and control system and additional cyber protections at no cost to District ratepayers. Federal agencies, including **EPA, FBI, CISA, and NSA**, have warned water and wastewater utilities of urgent, ongoing cyber threats.

A successful attack can cause lost data, unauthorized control of equipment such as pumps, operational disruption, financial loss, and interruption of essential services. This investment helps place PVCSD ahead of the threat and better prepared to protect the community.

Finally, as we mark 25 years since September 11th, 2001, may we remember not only the terror and profound loss of that day but also how Americans put aside their differences, stood together, and united against a new threat. May that spirit of service, courage, and unity remain with us indefinitely.

Next Regular Meeting of the Board:

**Monday, September 28th, 2026,
at 10:00 A.M.**

Best Regards,

Eric Steinlicht, General Manager

Upcoming Board Meetings

➤ Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Company

WHEN: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21st, 2026, AT 2:00 PM
WHERE: 33129 Cole Grade Road, Pauma Valley CA 92061
WEBSITE: <https://www.ranchopaumamwc.com/>

➤ Pauma Valley Roadway Association

WHEN: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7th, 2026, AT 6:00 PM
WHERE: RTJ Room, Pauma Valley Country Club
WEBSITE: <https://www.roadwayassn.org/>

➤ Pauma Valley Community Services District

WHEN: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28th, 2026, AT 10:00 AM
WHERE: 33129 Cole Grade Road, Pauma Valley CA 92061
WEBSITE: <https://www.paumavalleycsd.ca.gov/>

33129 Cole Grade Road, Pauma Valley, CA 92061
Monday - Friday | 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Office: (760) 742-1909
24/7 Dispatch: (760) 742-3112



SAFETY FAIR
NOVEMBER 7 • 10 AM-2 PM

