

HARBOR DEPARTMENT AWARD

By Janice Billings,
CdMRA Board Member (CdMSW) and CdMRA Historical Resources Committee Volunteer

What newly formed and award-winning city department has as its mission “Clean, Safe, and Well-enjoyed”? If you said The Harbor Department and its Code Enforcement Team, you were right!



The Award was for the “Innovative Program of the Year” from the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers. The program is unique since Newport Beach is one of the few jurisdictions with dedicated code enforcement staff specifically hired, trained, and assigned to patrol a harbor or similar body of water on a daily basis. They were recognized for their efforts in developing an exemplary program with unique and successful systems, policies, and procedures. The awards committee was especially impressed with the focus on education and collaboration with various stakeholders to create effective relationships with staff, Harbor users and a mutually understood and respected enforcement program. Providing code enforcement services in a water-based environment is a unique and challenging experience.

All the more remarkable is that the City of Newport Beach just recently took over management of Newport Harbor in 2017! And in 2018, city leaders approved the creation of the Newport Beach Harbor Department. Residents and visitors to Newport Beach are fortunate to have a forward-thinking City Council and Harbor Commission to support such

an innovative program. The City council provided staff and funding and the program is supported and complemented by the Commission. Staff had the opportunity to create a program “from the ground up.”

The Department manages the City’s guest Marina, renting slips and moorings, ensuring timely and professional delivery of harbor related programs and services, safety and rescue operations, special event permitting, water quality and marine sanitation support systems. Many of these services directly relate to code enforcement leading to the award by California’s Code Enforcement Association.

To put their responsibilities in context, Newport Harbor, one of the largest recreational boat harbors in the United States, is about 3 miles long, and encompasses nearly 21 square miles/880 acres of tidelands! About 9000 vessels berth in or adjacent to the Harbor and more that visit the Harbor daily or longer on a transient basis; 1000 city moorings and 23 rental boater slips; and over 1200 residential docks and 2300 commercial slips utilized by permanent and transient vessels. In addition, Department staff act as ambassadors of the Harbor, conducting daily patrols and providing assistance and education to the community and visitors. The team is entrusted with encouraging boaters to follow safe practices and harbor rules.



Prior to the formation of the Harbor Department, enforcement of the City's Title 17 Harbor Code was limited with no city staff specifically assigned to patrol the Harbor. Since then, the City established a thriving Harbor Code Enforcement Division with two full-time city employees: Harbormaster Paul Blank, Code Enforcement Supervisor Matt Cosylyon and three part-time Code Enforcement Officers: Jeff Goldfarb, retired attorney for many cities in Orange County; Lenora Pena Sanchez, retired crime scene investigator and photographer; and Steve Estrada, with a long career in fire safety. These officers bring unique and valuable skill sets to the team. Adding to the outstanding staff of one of the City's most valuable assets is a team of Harbor Service workers helping to patrol the harbor on a daily basis.

A significant component for winning the prestigious award was the Harbor Department's focus on education, safety and voluntary compliance. Two annual Summits are held for individuals who have a Marine Activities Permit or who are interested in obtaining a permit. Department leaders discuss safety, code and programming and give attendees the opportunity to learn and build relationships with each other. This component is central to creating an environment of respect for the proper use of the harbor and the opportunity to participate in high quality commercial experiences and recreational enjoyment.

The Corona del Mar Residents' Association congratulates the Harbor Department's Code Enforcement Team for this award and to the City Council and Harbor Commission for their vision in supporting the Newport Beach Harbor to be "Safe, Clean and Well-enjoyed"!