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August 28, 2019

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The **BIG ONE**

Is Southwest Washington prepared?

CAMERON KAST
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Five and a half minutes is about how long it takes to microwave a pot pie or listen to Billy Joel's "Piano Man" once through. It's also how long the intense shaking from the Cascadia Earthquake — often referred to simply as "The Big One" — is expected to last.

Nearly nine years ago, a magnitude 9 earthquake shook the northeastern corner of Japan for close to six full minutes. The March 11, 2011, earthquake with an epicenter near Tohoku destroyed more than 120,000 buildings and, according to Japan's Reconstruction Agency, caused an estimated \$199 billion dollars of damage, making it the most expensive natural disaster in world history.

Experts say a similar earthquake is "overdue" and should be

expected to hit the Pacific Northwest within the next century, if not sooner.

Researchers from regional universities, geotechnical engineers and emergency response agencies expect the earthquake to wreak havoc when it hits, bringing about the collapse of roads and bridges and rendering electricity and water infrastructure useless.

While some effects from natural disasters are unavoidable, experts are growing increasingly concerned about the lack of preparation by both governing bodies and individuals.

A ticking subduction zone

The Pacific Northwest sits on the Cascadia Subduction Zone, which stretches from the north end of Vancouver Island in British Columbia to Cape Mendocino, California, a distance of 620 miles. Cascadia is the meeting point of the smaller Juan de Fuca

If people are prepared for an event and they know it's going to happen and they are educated, they are significantly better when it comes to handling an event. As it is, we are not prepared simply because our society will not be bouncing back as quickly because we depend on all those utilities."

— Alison Pynch, Associate geotechnical engineer at Hart Crowser

plate and the large North American plate. As the two tectonic plates converge, one is forced under the other.

This causes the oceanic crust of the Pacific Ocean to move under the continent of North America at a rate of about 40 millimeters (1 ½ inches) per year.

The 2011 earthquake in Japan was due to this same type of fault line.

Alison Pynch, an associate geotechnical engineer at Hart Crowser, explained that the deeper an earthquake is, the longer it causes shaking at the surface. The creates a much higher potential for damage. A 30-second earthquake usually reaches a 7 or higher on the Richter scale, while a two-minute quake reaches an 8 or higher. By four minutes, an earthquake is at 9.0.

Along with depth, seismologists use the size of crustal

breaks to indicate how powerful an earthquake could be. The 1989 Loma Prieta, California, earthquake had a magnitude of 6.9, enough to cause more than \$6 billion in damage and kill 63 people. Loma Prieta sits on one of the most well-known and studied fault lines in the United States, the San Andreas Fault. According to the United States Geological Survey, the San Andreas Fault is capable of producing an earthquake no larger than a magnitude 8.3 due to its close proximity to both the surface (10 to 12 miles deep) and the size of crust that can break during an earthquake on the San Andres.

More than 40 miles below the earth's crust, the Juan de Fuca plate is moving under North America and melting into the earth. However, around 30 miles

See **BIG ONE** on Page A2

Brush fire near fairgrounds brings out firefighting helicopter

DNR unit stationed at Camp Bonneville for fire season this year

THE REFLECTOR

A brush fire along Northeast 179th Street near the Interstate 5 interchange brought out multiple agencies, including a Washington Department of Natural Resources helicopter stationed in the county for the first time this year.

Clark County Fire & Rescue reported it responded to a brush fire about an acre in size in the 2500 block of Northeast 179th Street at about 1:30 p.m. Aug.

20. Though trees, brush and grass were on fire, no structures were threatened.

Difficult terrain and the remote location of the fire led CCF&R to call for more resources, with five additional agencies responding, among them Clark County Fire District 6, Clark County Fire District 3, the Vancouver Fire Department, Cowlitz County Fire District 1 and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The DNR provided two dozen firefighters, two engines and a helicopter as part of the response. The helicopter, based at

See **FIRE** on Page A8

La Center schools set to avoid strike

Tentative agreement reached over the weekend

RICK BANNAN
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Though La Center teachers were ready to strike for more pay, it appears their union and the La Center School District reached a tentative contract agreement that was set for approval the night before school starts this week.

On Sunday morning, the district announced that it and the La Center Education Association (LCEA) had reached a tentative agreement for teacher contracts. The district announcement said that details of the contract would be released following ratification and approval by the district's board of directors Aug. 27.

School for La Center School District is set to start Aug. 28.

"We're thankful to have reached a tentative resolution," La Center School District Superintendent Dave Holmes said in a statement. "We're now commit-

ted to refocusing and reunifying around our shared passion: student learning."

"We will be starting school on time Wednesday!" LCEA President Denelle Eiesland said in a brief email Monday morning.

Though she, too, was unable to give specifics on the contract, she said that teachers were "ready and looking forward to starting the school year."

The tentative agreement follows a tense week for the district as the teachers' union and district staff went through negotiations. LCEA had organized rallies prior to bargaining sessions during the week and also held a root beer float social Aug. 22 at Holley Park to talk with the public about what was going on.

LCEA had previously voted 75-1 to strike if a contract it found agreeable was not reached by the start of the school year. LCSD was one of only a few Clark County districts not to strike in 2018, which Past LCEA President Kathy Bounds said was partly because of a lack of infor-

mation on the district budget at the time they were negotiating their contract. This school year, the association spent "an inordinate amount of time" analyzing the district's budget, concluding that the district had the funds to increase their pay.

See **STRIKE** on Page A8

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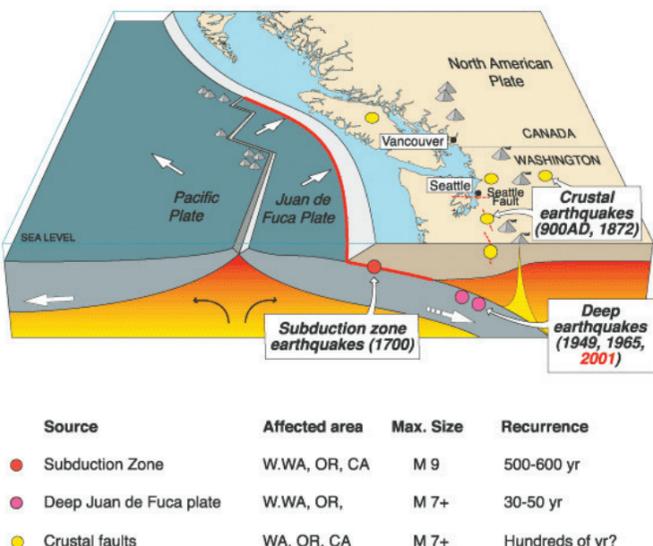
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Cascadia earthquake sources



COURTESY IMAGE



PHOTO BY MARY BROTON

The Cascadia Subduction Zone and the earthquakes near the fault over the years.

Timothy Joseph (T.J.) Miller of Battle Ground speaks with The Reflector about the gear he keeps in his survival Jeep while in Battle Ground Aug. 6.

Big One

Continued from page A1

down, the North American plate is stuck, causing pressure to build up underneath the surface of the earth. As the Juan de Fuca plate continues to move, the North American plate gets put under more pressure. Eventually, the pressure will become too much and the North American plate will snap upward, much like a breaking rubber band. Since the Cascadia Subduction Zone sits anywhere from 7 to 18 miles deeper than the San Andreas, if the entire plate breaks off, an earthquake larger than a 9.0 is more than likely.

“Geology works on a really long time scale, and we’ve been around for an eyelash of that really long time scale,” Pyrch said at “Science on Tap,” a seminar on earthquakes at Kiggins Theatre last month.

Pyrch explained how due to this larger-than-life timescale developing exact data on where and when an earthquake will happen is not possible.

Pyrch said the only way to make a prediction is to look at history. On average, a rupture in the Cascadia Subduction Zone happens once every 243 years, putting it around 75 years overdue. A large scale earthquake hasn’t happened since January 26, 1700, 76 years before the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Seismologists and geologists are able to determine these estimates by looking at the limestone of the seafloor and comparing it with the highly documented tsunami records of Japan. Before 1700, there was about a 780-year gap between the Cascadia earthquakes (920 to January 26, 1700).

According to an Oregon State University research team led by marine biologist Chris Goldfinger, throughout the past 10,000 years there have been at least 41 earthquakes on the Cascadia Fault Zone with 19 being a “full margin rupture” where the entire zone snaps.

Goldfinger said there’s a 33% chance of this “megaquake” hitting the Pacific Northwest in the next 50 years.



“Perhaps more striking than the probability numbers is that we can now say that we have already gone longer without an earthquake than 75% of the known times between earthquakes in the last 10,000 years,” Goldfinger said in a statement earlier this summer. “And 50 years from now, that number will rise to 85 percent.”

What a quake will look like

Pyrch says the Pacific Northwest is not at all prepared for an earthquake of this magnitude. She rates cities such as Portland at a 2.5 to 3 on a scale of 10 in terms of preparedness.

“Our biggest lack is public education and public preparedness,” she said.

Pyrch says populations around the world that are accustomed to a lack of electricity and water are significantly more prepared for a disaster such as an earthquake.

Pyrch offered Mexico and Japan as examples of countries well prepared in 2019. Both countries have earthquake early warning systems and a large culture built around the idea that a quake could hit at any moment.

“If people are prepared for an

event and they know it’s going to happen and they are educated, they are significantly better when it comes to handling an event,” she said. “As it is, we are not prepared simply because our society will not be bouncing back as quickly because we depend on all those utilities.”

Pyrch’s second problem with preparedness in the region is infrastructure. If the “Big One” were to hit this year, she believes most of the transportation hubs — land, sea and air — would all be compromised. Along with this, she mentioned that there will be significant landslide damage as well as the explosion of natural gas and liquid fuel lines and ruptured water pipes.

Liquid fuel in Southwest Washington is refined in the Seattle-Tacoma area and is transported through a pipeline that is “not seismically sound,” Pyrch said. She added that fuel for the area is stored near the Willamette River where there is an expected movement of 25 feet. The spread of fire is also a major concern given that many of the water lines will likely break, Pyrch said.

Pyrch noted how most of the electricity in the area is supplied by the Bonneville Power Administration. If its power and energy network falls due to an earthquake, power in the area is expected to go out for an indefinite period of time.

“We are spoiled and we expect everything to work on demand,” she said. “Our society does not function without running water, electricity and our cellphones and

communication networks working.”

In her seminar, Pyrch said soils in the Pacific Northwest are subject to liquefaction, the process of soils with a large water content losing strength due to a strongly applied force such as an earthquake. Under this force, sand and mud sink into the ground causing the buildings and structures on top of them to follow. Pyrch said soil underneath large economic hubs such as the Interstate 5 Bridge, the Glenn Jackson Bridge and the Portland International Airport all sit on liquefiable soil.

Pyrch expanded on liquefaction damage in a followup interview, explaining that the I-5 Bridge is “pretty much toast” if a large earthquake were to hit, but the bridge across I-205 might be salvageable.

“From what I understand there is a chance that it will be repairable,” Pyrch said about I-205, adding that while it might be repairable, it will not be a structure people are going to be able to drive over immediately.

The destruction of these bridges and economic trade hubs such as the Port of Portland and Portland International Airport (PDX) is expected to dramatically impact the surrounding area’s economy.

“One of the points of the (2011) Japan earthquake was that their economy took a big hit. In fact, the world economy took a big hit,” Pyrch said while explaining that one of the reasons the area needs to get ready for an earthquake is the fact that not everybody is going to die in the

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initial shock of the quake. Most people will survive, and building infrastructure for that survival period is key to withstanding the earthquake, she said.

Preparing

Timothy "T.J." Miller, of Battle Ground, has a degree in power systems and works for BPA. He echoed Pynch's statements while pointing to the solar panels and generators he has installed in his earthquake-proof shop.

"The irony of it is that I work for the power grid and yet I have solar and a generator because I know the grid is going down," he said.

Miller has spent nearly his whole life preparing for disaster to strike.

"I don't really know what made me want to be a survivalist other than the fact that I have five sisters and my mom always said, 'you're the man of the house, you're going to have to protect your sisters,'" he said. "I grew up in fear that I wouldn't be able to protect (them). It's an overcompensated thing about me and I can't help it."

Miller built a shop on his property for his business, Silenced Weapons. The shop doubles as his survival shelter, and he said it is structurally sound and can withstand an earthquake.

"This shop is built better than any of the houses around here," he said. "The inspector said if we were to have the subduction zone earthquake, all the houses (nearby) would be gone and this shop would still be here."

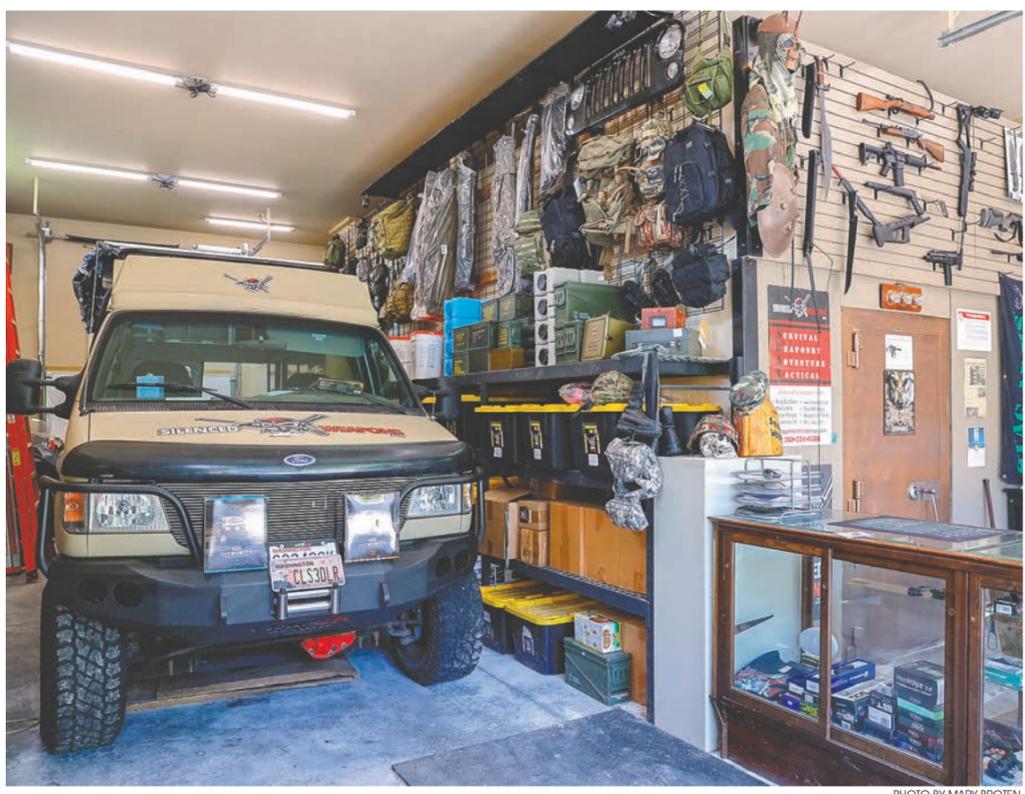
Miller believes a lack of food, water and shelter will be the biggest problems facing citizens in the Clark County area if disaster were to strike. He suggests bolting down everything in houses and shops and having enough food and water to sustain yourself and dependents.

"Water, water, water," Miller said when asked about what he feels is the most important thing people can do to prepare.

Miller's shop is equipped with a two-year supply of food and water for him and his wife. Some of his equipment includes a sun oven, more than 10,000 gallons of fresh water and a system to brew his own beer.

"Some people say it's not a key part of preparedness, but I think it is," Miller said as he opened a door in the back of his shop revealing a home brewery where he makes India Pale Ale.

Also in Miller's shop is an old ambulance from the Los Angeles Police Department that he is renovating to be a disaster vehicle complete with a few days worth of food, a fire ax and a truck vault, something he builds to securely store items in



Inside Timothy Joseph (T.J.) Miller of Battle Ground's shop for his business, Silenced Weapons Aug. 6. This structure is built to withstand an earthquake and doubles as his survival shelter.

a vehicle. Also equipped with a truck vault is Miller's Jeep Wrangler, which has everything from a snorkeling system to an air compressor.

"It's got everything I think people should have on their car in case of a disaster," Miller said before pulling out the truck vault containing a flare gun, hiking equipment and enough food and water to survive for a week. Miller said a lot of the ideas for his Jeep came after he experienced the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and realized how unprepared people in the area were.

"The only thing that made it out of the city were the 4-by-4's," Miller said.

While Miller and his wife may be prepared if the Cascadia Subduction Earthquake were to strike, a good majority of the Clark County and the Portland Metro Area has not started preparing. Pynch believes this lack of preparedness can be changed by working together to build an "earthquake culture."

While Miller may have a two-year supply of food, Savannah Brehmer of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends having a minimum of 72 hours, but encourages a supply of up to two weeks of food, water and necessary medicine.

"We also recommend people know their community because if you know them in advance, it's going to help out in terms of sharing resources," Brehmer said. "Resources may be spread thin in the event of an earthquake."

FEMA's website outlines a three-step plan citizens should have to prepare themselves for disaster. First, protect yourself

The BIG ONE

before an earthquake. To do this, FEMA recommends practicing what to do during in an earthquake, gathering critical documents and building a preparedness kit that lasts at least three days. Second, protect yourself during an earthquake and drop, cover and hold on. Lastly, protect yourself after an earthquake by monitoring local news reports, exiting damaged buildings and staying away from damaged areas. If your home has been damaged after a disaster or is no longer safe and you need a place to stay, text SHELTER and your ZIP code to 43362 to find the nearest public shelter in the area.

Pynch recommends doing everything possible to secure your home, such as strapping it to the foundation and knowing how to turn off the gas and water lines leading to your home. "Make sure your home is safe and somewhere you can be for two to four weeks without help," Pynch said. Along with this, he recommends building emergen-

cy lists and getting what you need whenever you're at the grocery store.

"If you have an extra five bucks, get that extra gallon of water," she said.

Eric Frank, the Public Information Officer of the Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency (CRESA), recommends doing all of the above and repeating it for your workplace and your vehicle, mentioning how not everyone will be at home when disaster strikes.

"I want to make sure I have whatever I need no matter where I am when disaster strikes," he said. "Those are the messages we spread constantly."

Building and 'Earthquake Culture'

During "Science on Tap" and in subsequent interviews, Pynch

- EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS KIT CONTENTS**
- The following will provide 72 hours of survival for one person:
- 3 gallons of water
 - 3-day supply of non-perishable food
 - Battery-powered or hand crank radio
 - Flashlight
 - First aid kit with bandages, necessary medicines and wound cleaner
 - Extra batteries
 - Whistle
 - Dust mask
 - Duct tape
 - Moist towelettes
 - Toilet paper
 - Garbage bags
 - Wrench and/or pliers
 - Manual can opener
 - Local maps
 - Extra clothing and blankets
 - Cellphone with charger and backup battery
 - Cash - ATMs may not be functioning
 - Fire extinguisher

stressed the importance of building a culture around preparedness for earthquakes. This culture, dubbed "earthquake culture," revolves around education about earthquakes and the substantial followup damage they will cause.

"Educate yourself and your neighbors because until we are educated about the problem, we

Continued on Page A4

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WHAT TO DO IF AN EARTHQUAKE STRIKES

If you are indoors:

Drop to your hands and knees. Cover your head and neck with your arms. This position protects you from falling and provides some protection for vital organs. Because moving can put you in danger from the debris in your path, only move if you need to get away from the danger of falling objects. If you can move safely, crawl for additional cover under a sturdy desk or table. If there is low furniture, or an interior wall or corner nearby and the path is clear, these may also provide some additional cover. Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.

Hold on to any sturdy shelter until the shaking stops. Do not run outside. Stay where you are until the shaking stops. Do not get in a doorway as this does not provide protection from falling or flying objects and you likely will not be able to remain standing.

If you are outdoors:

If you can, move away from buildings, streetlights and utility wires. Once in the open, drop, cover and hold on. Stay there until the shaking stops. This might not be possible in a city, so you may need to duck inside a building to avoid falling debris.

If you are in bed:

If you are in bed, stay there and cover your head and neck with a pillow. At night, hazards and debris are difficult to see and avoid; attempts to move in the dark result in more injuries than remaining in bed.

• If you are in a moving vehicle:

It is difficult to control a vehicle during the shaking so stop as quickly and safely as possible and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses and utility wires. Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges or ramps that the earthquake may have damaged.

Credit — FEMA.Gov



PHOTO BY MARY BROTEN

CRESA Emergency Management Division Manager Scott Johnson speaks with The Reflector while at the agency headquarters in Vancouver July 30.



PHOTO BY MARY BROTEN

CRESA Emergency Management Coordinator Eric Frank speaks with The Reflector while at the agency headquarters in Vancouver July 30.



putting emergency plans in hard-set “silos” can cause confusion about which plan to use during a disaster.

“Planning is a concept that revolves around looking at what is actually going on and the impact it has on people’s life safety, the severity of the incident and the impact to our key infrastructure,” Johnson said. “Our plans have gotten much more flexible. Our plans have gotten much more responsive. That allows us to deal with things more effectively but it also means that we need a more informed and engaged citizenry because we need you (citizens) to buy us time to assess what is going on.”

Johnson and Frank recommend taking classes, building a community with neighbors and reminding elected officials to prepare for disaster before it strikes.

“It takes educated community members to remind our elected officials all the time that this is an important topic,” Frank said.

Brehmer repeated CRESA’s thoughts about becoming more educated and even suggested talking to Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in the area. The CERT program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for hazards that might impact the area, such as earthquakes. The CERT program also trains volunteers in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations.

Amanda Siok, the earthquake contact for FEMA Region X (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington), also highlighted the importance of individually preparing and gaining these skills and the impact they have on the community.

“It is really important that the public prepares themselves because the less prepared individuals are, the less prepared the community as a whole will be,” Siok concluded.

States is in terms of a disaster.

“Do adults make it out in two minutes?” she asked.

Pyrch pressed the need for educating yourself, your family and your neighbors about the importance of preparing for an earthquake, something CRESA believes to be just as important as building your own personal disaster kit.

“Having the mindset (for disaster) is the biggest piece,” Frank said. “A positive attitude and connecting with your neighbors ... are what is going to make our communities stronger and more disaster-resilient.”

Frank noted that images from recent disasters show neighbors helping neighbors, not first responders in uniform. Frank said connecting with neighbors before a disaster is important because the area as we know it will end up with fractured roads and downed bridges, making it harder for first

responders to reach disaster sites.

“It’s going to be neighbors relying on each other for the first few hours and days of a disaster until we (emergency response) can make that connection again,” Frank said.

CRESA Emergency Management Division Manager Scott Johnson said, in the past, the government had hard-set plans for if disaster were to strike.

“From about 1945 up until 2005, there was an idea that governments should have very detailed plans that covered every aspect of every potential thing that could go wrong,” Johnson said. “We had a very, very detailed earthquake plan and a very, very detailed flood plan.”

Now, Johnson said governments and emergency response agencies have changed their mindset from hard fixed plans to the concept of “planning” because

Continued from page A3

Mexico around the Pacific Ring of Fire that she believes are prepared if disaster were to strike tomorrow. She mentioned activities such occasional statewide earthquake drills.

“They can evacuate a building in under two minutes,” Pyrch explained.

She later used the example of a fire drill at a public high school to show how unprepared the United

are not going to make any progress,” Pyrch said. “Until it is a priority within our society and in our communities to be ready to handle a large earthquake, we are not going to be ready.”

To discuss this “earthquake culture” Pyrch uses the example of other countries such as Japan and

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- Pump Repair or Replace
- Pumping
- Hydro-Jetting
- County Required Contracts
- Maintenance
- Septic Restoration
- System Verifications

AAA SEPTIC SERVICES LLC
687-8960

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