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LS 7743

Re: Vertical Datum Change in the City of San Diego

Date: February 4, 2010

In March of 1963, the City of San Diego bumped up all of its elevations by 6.12 feet as shown in the attached diagrams. An elevation, whether it was a benchmark or a height limitation, listed on a deed before March of 1963 would be using the old datum; anything after that date would be on the new datum (6.12 feet higher). An elevation of 100.00 feet before 1963 would now be 106.12 feet.

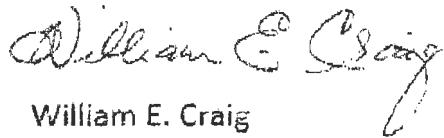
Anytime that elevations are referenced within the limits of the City of San Diego, great care must be taken so as to avoid confusion related to this change in vertical data. After receiving a letter from the Captain Supervisor of the Southwest Division of the USC&GS in June of 1955, suggesting that the City change its vertical reference, the City of San Diego finally adopted the change in March of 1963. Once the City enacted this resolution, it was then in line with other entities in the County and State so that they were speaking the same proverbial language as it relates to elevations.

Up until that time, the City had been using a parochial reference based upon local topographic sheets and general construction plans. This had to change with the rapid growth of the area's population and the onset of some large infrastructure projects that would span both the City and County. The prevailing feeling was that the City had to come into compliance with the County and update their vertical datum so as to avoid having two sets of divergent elevations within the scope of one job.

The newly referenced datum was the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD 29) and is known as Mean Sea Level. The basis for this was the average height of the sea for all stages of tide. This was done by taking hourly height readings over a 19-year period and is currently the most widely accepted vertical reference.

Hopefully, this clears up some of the confusion related to height restrictions in your neighborhood. Once again, anything related to City of San Diego elevations before March of 1963 (whether it be benchmarks or height restrictions) must be categorically bumped up by 6.12 feet when looked at after that date.

If you need to contact me, I can be reached at 760-788-2892 (home), or 760-419-7351 (cell).


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