FALL 2008

PECAN GROVE MUD NEWS

Pecan Grove MUD Bond Election

November 4, 2008, is Election Day. In addition to voting for President, and U.S. and state congressional / legislatorial representation, Pecan Grove Municipal Utility District has placed a Bond Election on the ballot for residents of Pecan Grove. The bonds are to allow the board of Pecan Grove MUD to improve our levees to meet the latest mandates from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The rationale behind upgrading our levees is two-fold.

First is the impact on flood insurance rates for residents of the district. If we do not make the levee improvements, every homeowner will pay substantially higher rates for flood insurance. Flood insurance premiums are based on risk. The modified levee, once certified, will mean that homeowners inside the levee who have flood insurance prior to the effective date of the new flood plain maps (as early as June 2009) will pay the lowest (Preferred) rate. Based on current FEMA regulations, those who purchase flood insurance after that date and are inside the certified levee will pay the middle (Standard) rate. If the bonds are rejected and we do not make the improvements, then everyone will pay more for flood insurance up to the top rate of Premium. Based on information we have ob-tained, the difference between Preferred and Premium is currently about $2,000 per year on most homes in our district. This is also an argument for everyone who does not already have flood insurance to buy it now.

The second reason to upgrade our levees is the added peace of mind of knowing that our homes are protected from 100-year flooding events. We have been fortunate in Pecan Grove not to have experienced anything more than street flooding since the district was created. By its very definition, a 100-year flood event is an unusual occurrence, but its rarity does not make it any less devastating. Fort Bend County and FEMA Engineers recently completed a study that shows changes in the Brazos River that have caused the 100-year flood elevation to be raised a little over two feet (2'). Thus, we need to adjust our levee protection accordingly.

For these reasons, the board of Pecan Grove MUD has called a Bond Election for the sale of bonds that will allow for the improvement of our flood protection. If you would like additional in-formation on the Bond Election, you can go to our website at www.pecangrovemud.com or call us at 281-238-5000.

Elección de Bonos de Pecan Grove MUD

El 4 de noviembre de 2008 es Día de Elección. Además de votar por presidente y miembros del poder legislativo estatal y de los Estados Unidos, el Distrito de Servicios Públicos Municipales de Pecan Grove ha colocado una elección de bonos en la boleta de votación para los residentes de Pecan Grove. Los bonos son para permitirle a la junta directiva de Pecan Grove MUD mejorar nuestros diques marginales para cumplir con los más recientes requisitos de la Agencia Federal de Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés). El razonamiento detrás del mejoramiento de nuestros diques marginales tiene dos aspectos.

El primer aspecto es el impacto que tiene en los seguros de inundación de los residentes del distrito. Si no hacemos las mejoras a los diques marginales, cada propietario tendrá que pagar primas considerablemente más altas de seguro de inundación. Las primas de seguro de inundación están basadas en riesgo. Una vez que el dique marginal modificado sea certificado, los propietarios dentro del dique que tengan seguro de inundación antes de la fecha de entrada en vigencia de los nuevos mapas de zonas inundables (pede ser tan pronto como junio de 2009) pagarán la prima más baja (preferencial). Basándose en las regulaciones actuales de FEMA, quienes compren seguro de inundación después de esa fecha y están dentro del dique marginal certificado pagarán la prima media (estándar). Si los bonos son rechazados y no hacemos las mejoras, todos pagarán más por

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Bond Election

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seguro de inundación hasta inclusive la prima premium más alta. Basándonos en información que hemos obtenido, la diferencia entre la prima preferencial y la premium es actualmente alrededor de $2,000 por año para la mayoría de las casas en nuestro distrito. Esto también es una razón para que todos lo que aún no tienen seguro de inundación la obtengan.

La segunda razón para mejorar nuestros diques marginales es la tranquilidad de saber que nuestros hogares están protegidos de inundaciones del tipo que ocurre una vez cada 100 años. En Pecan Grove hemos sido afortunados de no haber experimentado nada más serio que inundaciones de calles desde que fue creado el distrito. Por definición, un evento de inundación del tipo que ocurre una vez cada 100 años es un hecho inusual, pero eso es menos devastador.

Los ingenieros del Condado de Fort Bend y de FEMA recientemente completaron un estudio que muestra cambios en el río Brazos River que han hecho que se suba un poco más de dos pies (2') el nivel de inundación de 100 años. Por esa razón, debemos ajustar nuestra protección de diques marginales.

Por estas razones, la junta directiva de Pecan Grove MUD ha convocado una Elección de Bonos para la venta de bonos que permitirán el mejoramiento de nuestra protección contra inundaciones.

Si desea información adicional sobre la Elección de Bonos, visite nuestro sitio en Internet en www.pecangrovemud.com o llámenos al 281-238-5000.

The Lessons of Hurricane Ike

In the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, millions of residents and businesses were left without power (an estimated 99% in Houston and surrounding areas) and hundreds of thousands dealt without water…some for weeks. What's more, just a short term water pressure loss forced many water systems, including the City of Houston, to issue a boil water order to its customers.

For years, PGMUD has planned for the possibility of a major power outage. We have installed emergency backup generators for our water plants and built an elevated storage tank that can provide 650,000 gallons of safe drinking water in the event all power is lost. In addition, a mobile diesel refuel tank and emergency fuel storage housed in Pecan Grove kept us from relying on overburdened fuel delivery companies to keep our generators running.

On the wastewater side, we recently completed installation of a backup generator for our largest sewage pump station on Old South, and installed relief pipes in our collection system. These improvements, together with an emergency backup generator at our wastewater treatment plant and a mobile trailer mounted generator,kept the sew-age collection and treatment systems up and running.

Although these facilities are a significant investment to install and maintain, having them in place and operational…and having our operator, EDP, station emergency response personnel inside Pecan Grove during the storm, resulted in no loss in water pressure and sewage did not back into your homes.

Most of you have friends and family in the Houston and Galveston areas that went, in some cases, weeks without power and/or water. As of the writing of this article, many are still without. Having no power is an inconvenience. Having no water makes daily living almost unbearable. It often takes tragic events such as this for us to truly understand the importance of drinkable water. It's a good time to revisit our usage practices and do the best we can to conserve and protect the resources we so desperately rely upon each and every day of our lives.

Please take some time to read conservation articles included in this and past PGMUD newsletters, and in the *"Conservation"* section on our website. There are countless tips to not only become better stewards of our water supply, but also to put a little money back in your pocket.

We hope you and yours recovered from Ike as best as possible, and we wish each and every one of you a happy and healthy Holiday season. As always, if you have any questions regarding PGMUD and our services, you can contact us via the website,*www.pecangrovemud.com*, or by calling 281-238-5000. ■

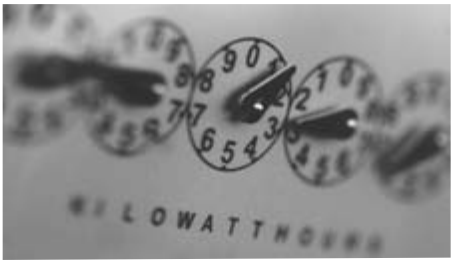
How to conserve both water and energy… and save money in the process!

We may live in the "land of plenty"…but when it comes to our natural resources, "plenty" does not mean infinite. There have been times in our history when it has been necessary to curb our voracious appetite for natural resources. Certainly during wartime…when the nation's needs came first…and today, as our growing demand for energy and water increasingly outstrips our supply. We may have the same amount of water on this planet as we did at the dawn of time, but most of that water is undrinkable and the population sharing that amount has exploded. As a result, we have drawn down the supply in our underground aquifers faster than it can be renewed.

There is an urgency to avoid wasting our valuable resources and to utilize them more efficiently so that supplies are readily available in the future. Cost is also a formidable driving force toward conservation practices. As energy costs rise, the research and development nec-essary to bring alternatives online increases correspondingly; wit-ness the recent expansions in the use of wind turbines and solar power options as viable parts of the energy mix.

The more we understand how we use energy and water in our homes, the more we realize that saving one resource very often results in saving the other. In fact, many of the things that use the most water around the house also have high-energy consumption… case in point, water heaters.

The typical U.S. family's energy bills average about $1,600 a year and, sadly, a large amount of that energy is wasted. While the cost of water is nowhere near the annual investment required to cool, heat, light and power our homes, water bills **are** rising dramatically, and the days of cheap and plentiful water are history. As a result, the days of wasteful practices and habits should be history as well.



DOUBLE UP AND SAVE TWICE…

According to the US Department of Energy, water heating (13%) and appliances and light-ing (34%) use just about half of the energy we consume at home. If we match up these same categories with water consumption, we can determine our joint conservation targets pretty quickly. While there are long lists of ways that water and energy can be conserved, we'll concentrate on the 'two-fers' here.

In Hot Water…

There are four basic ways to take charge of your water heating bills: ***don't heat the water so hot; insulate the water heater; use less; or upgrade the equipment to a newer, more efficient model.***

■ Lower the temperature setting on the water heater to 120 degrees…that temperature will prevent bacteria from building up and will still be sufficient to generate enough comfortable hot water for most uses.

■ Add an insulation 'jacket' to the tank and wrap any exposed pipes to knock off up to 15 percent of the hot water costs.

■ About every three months, drain off a quart of water from the tank to remove any sediment that impedes heat transfer and lowers the efficiency of the hot water heater. Be sure to follow the manufac-turer's instructions to accomplish this.

■ Time for a new hot water heater? Don't wait until it fails before replacing it, and take time to research energy and water efficiency and performance. Look for the **Energy Star** and **EnergyGuide** labels which list key information you'll want to consider when making a purchase decision.

At home, hot water is generally used in three rooms -- the bathroom, laundry room and the kitchen - and there are some great conservation options for each.

Here's how hot water use breaks out: 32 percent of the heated water is used in washing clothes; 20 percent goes down the shower drain; another 20 percent is used for bathing (sink and bath tub use). Automatic dishwashing consumes 12 percent, which leaves 5 percent for preparing food and 4 percent for washing hands. Consider these simple changes to start saving in:

The Bathroom…

■ Start with the obvious…fix leaky faucets and plumbing joints. Wasting water is bad enough, but if that water is HOT, the cost goes up.

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Energy and Water

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Fixing a leaky faucet/fixture can save 20 gallons a day for every leak stopped.

■ In the shower: install a low-flow showerhead. You don't have to sacrifice pressure and 'designer' spray cycles - even the efficient new heads have them. Restricting the flow can cut shower water use in half, and save 500 to 800 gallons a month. Here's an amazing factoid: a five-minute shower with a low-flow showerhead would save enough water in a year to fill a 15-ft. aboveground pool…or about 4550 gallons. If everyone in the US did this, we'd save enough water to fill about 2,100 Giants Stadiums!

■ Install aerators on the faucets. Surprisingly, faucets account for about 15 percent of the indoor water use, and they usually flow at twice the rate necessary to get the job done. If aerators are added to both bathroom and kitchen sinks, about 1000 gallons of water a year can be saved…and much of that is energy-intensive hot water. While you're at the sink, turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving. It may seem like such a little amount of water (three gallons on average for either activity), but it adds up to an annual sav-ings of 2,880 gallons.

■ Take shorter showers -- even a one or two minute reduction can save up to 700 gallons a month. A lengthy shower will really 'fire up' a hot water heater. Consider adding a plastic container or bucket at the side of the shower to capture unused water. This can be used for household chores, to flush the toilet or, if it isn't soapy, to water houseplants.

The Laundry Room…

Appliances account for about 1/5th of your household energy consumption, and two of these (washer and dryer) are most often found in the laundry room. About 90 percent of the energy used by the washing machine is to heat the water, so this provides the best conservation options: use less -- or cooler -- water.

■ With the many choices of cold water detergents on the market today, 'warm' or 'hot' water settings can usually be reserved for really dirty clothes or for combating stubborn stains.

■ Use your washing machine only with full loads and with the minimum water setting to get the job done.

■ Wash bulky bedding and/or towels separately from lighter-weight clothing items. This will help the dryer work more efficiently. While the dryer doesn't use water directly, maximizing its performance is key to cutting energy costs.

■ When it's time to purchase a new washing machine, there are some great high-efficiency choices out there to choose from. Always check for the **Energy Star** and **EnergyGuide** labels in making your decision. The new front-loading, horizontal-axis models generally save energy and water. The older top-loading vertical-axis models immerse the items in a full tub of water, and then agitate it through the wash cycle and spin it through the rinse cycle. The new high efficiency (**He**) style doesn't have to fill the tub so full, and tumbles laundry repeatedly through fast cycles, similar to the motion in a clothes dryer (using about half the water in the process). Thanks to the fast spin cycles, the **He** type is also able to get more water out of the clean laundry, which reduces the time and energy needed for drying.

The Kitchen…

There are basically two hot water consumers in the kitchen: the dishwasher and the sink. Thanks to the National Appliance Energy Conservation Act of 1987, manufacturers made significant water- and energy-efficiency improvements to dishwashers by reducing hot water use, which accounts for most of the energy used by this appliance.

■ Today, installing a 7.0 gallon per load (gpl) dishwasher to re-place a model that used 9.5 to 12.0 gpl will save an estimated 2.6 kWh per household, per day. This adds up to a 940 kWh savings per household, per year.

■ A dishwasher uses energy for several functions: heating water for cleaning and sanitization; to run the motor; and to operate the heater or fan to dry the dishes. Making setting adjustments offers several good options for conserving water and energy, so be sure to check the manufacturer's instructions and owner's manual to

discover ways to tailor energy and water cycles needed for a particular load.

■ Since a heating element is generally used to dry the dishes at the end of the washing cycle - and requires about 7 percent of the energy used by the machine - choose the no-heat drying option if available, or simply turn off the dishwasher, open the door, and allow the dishes to dry themselves.

■ Scrape, don't pre-wash the dishes. Studies show that most people continue to pre-wash before loading items into the dishwasher, even though models built in the last 5-10 years do a great job cleaning even heavily soiled dishes. If you feel like you simply must pre-rinse, use cold water.

■ Wash only full loads. The dishwasher uses the same amount of water whether it is full or not, and this practice really saves energy, too.

■ Select the 'light-wash' option if there is one. Experts say that it is rarely necessary to use the normal setting on a dishwasher. This light-wash option cleans just as well and can reduce the water use up to 55 percent. That could translate into an annual savings of 2,860 gallons of water.

■ Since almost 50 percent of American households have a garbage disposal in the kitchen, here is yet another way to SAVE at the sink. Use the disposal less, and the garbage more - even better, COMPOST! This saves between 50 and 150 gallons a month. If you must use the disposal, run it with cold water.

There are hundreds of ways to conserve energy and water at home. The more conscious we become about how we use water and energy, the more likely we are to use them more efficiently.

The bottom line, of course, is that we will not only be saving money, but we will also be active participants in helping to extend the lives of our precious natural resources. ■

Tips to Stay Safe this Holiday Season

Last minute work projects, multiplying activities for the kids, travel planning, and shopping, shopping, and more shopping. The Holiday season can be a magical time, but the increased hustle and bustle can also take our mind away from safety issues and leave us more vulnerable to theft and other common holiday crimes.

Please review the following tips from the Houston Police Department, and stay safe, prepared and aware this Holiday season. For a more complete list of ***Holiday Safety Tips***...please visit our website: *www.pecangrovemud.com/holidaysafety*.

While Shopping:

- Stay alert and aware of what's going on in your immediate surroundings. Shop with friends. There's safety in numbers.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay for purchases with a check, or a credit or debit card. When carrying a purse, never wrap the strap around your arms or shoulders. You could risk injury from a would-be purse-snatcher. Use a clutch purse tucked under your arm or wear a fanny pack. Men should not carry wallets in their rear pants pockets.
- Protect your debit card PIN, credit card and drivers license numbers from strangers.
- Watch your purchases while eating in mall food courts. Bags can be quickly taken.
- Educate your children on what to do if they are lost or get separated from you.
- Don't overburden yourself or jeopardize your safety by carrying too many packages.

In the Parking Lot:

- Avoid shopping in the evening and park in a high visibility area. Do not park next to a vehicle with dark tinted windows.
- When carrying packages to the car, have your keys in your hand. Be observant of anyone watching you. If possible, move your car to another parking space to deter a burglary of your vehicle.
- Walk briskly, confidently and directly through the parking lot.

PGMUD Project Updates

Surface Water

The Surface Water Treatment Plant (SWTP) is currently in the preliminary engineering design phase. PGMUD has completed the required small-scale pilot-testing requirements for the proposed treatment system and is working with the state regulatory agency, The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, for final approval of the treatment process.

The SWTP will receive raw surface water from Oyster Creek obtained through an agreement with the Brazos River Authority. Raw surface water quality parameters, such as turbidity, taste, odor and color, can vary significantly depending on seasonal variations and activities occurring upstream of the SWTP diversion point. As this is especially true for the Brazos River, the District Board of Directors established finished water treatment goals and standards based on the following overall guiding principals:

- Compliance with the existing and anticipated future drinking water regulations
- Achieving finished water that is aesthetically pleasing to customers
- Minimizing water quality impacts on the existing distribution system pipelines

The District considered multiple technologies and treatment processes while considering total cost and trying to maintain the high water quality standards expected by PG residents. The process ultimately selected and evaluated during the pilot-testing phase included the use of low pressure membranes followed by polishing treatment with granular activated carbon (GAC) for removal of potential taste and odor. The selected treatment processes succeeded in producing quality finished water during the pilot test. The preliminary SWTP design is expected to be completed by early April of next year. The District looks forward to working towards meeting the mandated surface water conversion requirements while providing efficient and quality water production for residents and all customers.

Levee

On July 2, 2008, Jones & Carter, Inc., the District's Engineer, submitted information and documentation on certification of the existing District levee system to the FEMA Region VI office. The documentation was based on the current base flood elevation (BFE) shown on the current published Flood Issuance Rate Map (FIRM), as no preliminary or revised FIRMs have been released by FEMA from the ongoing Brazos River Study. The preliminary FIRMs are anticipated to be published by FEMA before December 31st. Once preliminary FIRMs are released additional information will be submitted relating to the revised BFE and any improvements made to comply with revised elevations. Based on the most recent Brazos River

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Let Us Recycle Those Christmas Trees!

Once again, the District will pick up -- and recycle -- all clean Christmas trees placed curbside. As of now, the date has not been determined. We will pass this along as soon as it is worked out with our trash hauler, WCA.

Trees with flocking, lights, ornaments or other decorations **can not be recycled**, so place only clean trees at the curb by 7:00 a.m. Please do your part this Holiday season to cut down on the unnecessary use of landfill space. We also encourage you -- throughout the year -- to fill up those curbside recycling bins. For items not accepted in bins, we encourage you to call or visit the Fort Bend County Recycle/Environmental Center at 1200 Blume Road, on the western edge of the Rosenberg city limits.

Hours of operation at the Fort Bend County Recycle / Environmental Center are:

Recycling: Monday-Saturday: 8:00am - 4:00pm (except holidays), Closed on Wednesdays.

Household Hazardous Waste: Mondays: 9am - 6pm, and the first Saturday of the month: 8am-2pm.

The automated Recycling/Household Hazardous Waste information telephone line is 281-633-7527.

More information can be found on our web site, *www.pecangrovemud.com*, where we have a link to the Fort Bend County Recycle / Environmental Center web site.

Some important information from the Pecan Grove Volunteer Fire Department

Christmas Tree Safety Tips

The holiday season is a time of joy and celebration but there are precautions which need to be taken to avoid fire and injuries. According to the National Fire Protection Association, between 2002 and 2006, there were 240 Christmas tree fires in U.S. homes **resulting in 23 deaths, 12 injuries and $11.4 million in direct property damage.**

Here are some safety tips:

■ Look for the freshest tree if you're selecting a live tree. It is less of a fire hazard. It should be green and the needles should be difficult to pull from its branches and should not break when bent between your fingers. The trunk butt should be sticky with resin. When you tap the trunk butt on the ground, it shouldn't lose too many needles.

■ In setting up a live tree, first trim a few inches off the trunk to allow better water absorption and to help prevent the tree from drying out. Keep the stand filled with water, checking it daily. Use a wide-based, sturdy stand for stability. You don't want a tree to fall over! If small children will be around, consider cutting back lower branches to avoid eye injuries to them.

■ Make sure to place the tree away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters. Also, do not use candles near the tree or any flammable object (more candle fires occur during the month of Decem-ber than any other month of the year).

■ Decorate your tree with children in mind. On lower branches, avoid ornaments that are sharp or breakable, ornaments with small, detachable parts and ornaments that look like food or candy since small children will be able to reach these.

■ Use only UL (Underwriters' Lab Inc.) approved lights and cords to decorate your tree. Check lights for exposed or frayed wires, loose connections or broken sockets.

■ Make sure not to overload extension cords (as a general rule, UL recommends stringing no more than three standard-size sets of lights together). Do not run electrical cords under rugs or tree skirts, and keep them away from tree water!

■ When replacing a light bulb, the replacement bulb should be of equal or lesser wattage than that recommended by the manufacturer.

■ Turn off the tree lights when you go to bed. Do not depart from home with the tree lights on or leave the tree in an unattended room. An inexpensive plug-in timer can be used to ensure that lights are not left on.

■ If you plan on purchasing an artificial tree, look for a label to indicate that it's fire-retardant.

Following these precautions will help you and your family to have a safe and enjoyable holiday season! Please feel free to call the Fire Station at (281)341-6677 if you have any questions or concerns. We are here to serve YOU.

Also, don't forget that PGVFD is a charitable organization, and as such, any donations made to the department may be tax deductable. If you're looking to make any year-end donations, please keep your fire department in mind. Any contribution made would be GREATLY appreciated. All donations made to the Department go directly towards making your community a safer place to live.

Remember.... **WE DEPEND ON YOU, SO YOU CAN DEPEND ON US!**

From the Pecan Grove Volunteer Fire Department, HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Projects Update

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model information the existing levee crest elevation is above the projected base flood elevation.

FEMA certification requires that the levee maintain a minimum of three (3) feet height above the BFE (freeboard) in order for the levee to be recognized for purposes of establishing premiums for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). While the levee is at least 18-inches above the BFE in all locations and it will act to protect Pecan Grove, a portion of the levee is expected to be below the FEMA required level for official certification. As such the levee will need minor fill in a few locations to meet FEMA certification requirements. For information on the NFIP please see their website at *http://www.floodsmart.gov.*

Storm Water Management

The District completed the first year of implementation for the Storm Water Management Plan and will file the Annual Report for Year 1 tasks with the TCEQ. The District will begin preparation for Year 2 implementation tasks which are described in the Storm water Management Plan posted on the District's website. ■

WHO TO CALL:

Water, sewer and drainage questions:

PGMUD Customer Service Office
2035 FM 359, Suite 13 (located in the rear of the Sweet Mesquite Center)
(281) 238-5000
Office Hours: 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
After Hours: (281) 238-5000; 24 hrs/7 days a week

NOTE: *If you have water or sewer related problems, PLEASE CALL US BEFORE YOU CALL THE PLUMBER! We will investigate the problem at no cost to you. If it is found to be a water district-related problem, we will arrange to correct it. If it is not a water district issue, we will provide our advice. Remember, we are here to help!*

Holiday Garbage Collection / Customer Service Office Hours

Thanksgiving, Thursday, November 27th
There is no trash pickup on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday.
Next pick up date is Monday, December 1st.
The Customer Service Office will be closed
Thursday the 27th and Friday the 28th.

Christmas, Thursday, December 25th
There is no trash pickup on Christmas Day, Thursday.
Next pick up date is Monday, December 29th.
The Customer Service Office will be closed
Thursday the 25th and Friday the 26th.

New Year's Day, Thursday, January 1st
There is no trash pickup on New Year's Day, Thursday.
Next pick up date is Monday, January 5th.
The Customer Service Office will be closed Thursday the 1st.

Pecan Grove Municipal Utility District

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