

# Federal officials remove obstacle to demolition of Huntington pier

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HUNTINGTON BEACH — It is better to be safe than historic, the Federal Emergency Management Agency said earlier this month as it removed one of the last obstacles to demolition of the city's 75-year-old pier.

In a Dec. 5 letter, the agency notified the city that the historic preservation officer agrees with engineers who determined last summer that the storm-damaged pier cannot be salvaged.

Engineering studies completed after a crushing storm washed away 250 feet of the structure in January 1988 found the pier unsafe for public use. Given those findings, the city was not surprised by the agency's decision, said Rich Barnard, deputy city administrator.

The landmark pier, built in 1914, was placed on the Federal Register of Historic Places this year, which meant the city had to ser-

cure federal approval for the demolition.

"We were concerned for a while," Barnard said. "In the beginning, the office hadn't been included in the plan to demolish the pier and it wasn't up to speed on all the homework we'd done on the pier's condition. But once we provided that information, they saw the wisdom in what we are proposing."

He said the city and the state Office of Historic Preservation are now working cooperatively to build a new pier that will look much like the one that has stood at the end of Main Street over the years.

"We're even looking at building some of the old pier into the new one," Barnard said. "We want to preserve anything of it that we can."

The pier, once 1,830 feet long, had deteriorated badly in the salt water and air even before it was damaged in last year's storm. It was closed for safety reasons in

July 1988.

City officials have promised seaside strollers a new pier by Labor Day 1991. Rebuilding is expected to cost about \$11 million. The city has \$6.5 million of that amount available and has launched a fund-raising drive for the rest.

All that is left to do before the old pier falls is to photograph it for posterity. Demolition is expected to begin in May; construction on the new pier would start soon after.

The pier will have a new eight-sided restaurant on an octagonal platform at the end. Its seaward end will be higher than its land end. Engineers said the current pier is too low in the water, a major reason that it was damaged so badly in the 1988 storm.

Final architectural drawings of the new structure have yet to be completed. Ron Yeo, a Corona del Mar architect, is leading the project.

