



OCTOPUS FLOODS AQUARIUM

Curious two-spotted octopus plays with filter releasing hundreds of gallons of seawater flooding the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Santa Monica, (CA) February 26, 2009 – When Santa Monica Pier Aquarium staff member Aaron Kind showed up early to work on Thursday morning, it was clear that something had gone terribly wrong. “The first thing I noticed was that there was water everywhere,” said Kind. He quickly traced the source of the problem to the Aquarium’s recently renovated Kids’ Corner tanks and was able to shut off the flow of water. Emergency phone calls were made to Aquarium staff and everyone assembled quickly to get the marine education center back into working order before a school bus arrived with 60 students for a 9:30 a.m. field trip. Aquarist Brianne Emhiser was still asleep on her day off when her phone rang at 7:10 a.m. Emhiser was one of the first staff to respond and traced the source of the problem to the Aquarium’s small two-spotted octopus. “Our best guess is that the octopus, who is incredibly gregarious and curious, tugged on a valve in her tank last night causing a steady stream of water to overflow out of the tank. We’re estimating we lost a few hundred gallons of sea water onto the Aquarium floor,” Emhiser said.

Water from the octopus tank made its way through the Aquarium and back into the staff offices, soaking carpets and newly installed environmentally friendly linoleum and cork flooring.

While creating a massive mess for staff to contend with, no animals were harmed as a result of the flood. “It’s actually quite comical – I think the whole staff is still laughing about the ordeal,” said Tara Crow, the Aquarium’s Public Programs Manager. “The only heartbreaking part is that our new office floors (installed last fall), are potentially damaged. Even after two hours of cleaning up, we still have salt water seeping up between the tiles every step we take.”

But by 9:30 a.m. when the school bus rolled into the parking lot, the public portion of the Aquarium was back in order, mopped up and ready to accommodate an eager group of first-graders and their teachers. There to greet the group was the two-spotted octopus, still active in her tank, seemingly oblivious to the havoc wreaked just hours before.