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Big Waves and High Tides Can Be Just as Insidious as Hurricanes.

Cities on every coast are facing hard, expensive decisions because of the seemingly more mundane effects of a warming planet.

A couple of days before Christmas last year, battered by heavy waves, the end of the half-mile-long Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf unexpectedly tumbled into Monterey Bay.

A tourist magnet claiming to be the longest fully wooden structure of its kind in the Western hemisphere, the wharf was open for business when the collapse happened, forcing visitors and workers to evacuate. Two engineers and a project manager at the wharf's terminus fell in the water but escaped serious injury. Some heavy construction equipment and a large public restroom weren't so lucky.

The collapse, triggered by waves that may have been up to 30 feet high, came just a year after another winter storm had damaged the same section of pier (a storm that came one year after another winter storm hit Monterey Bay). The construction equipment and workers were there to help with repairs. For much of the past decade, Santa Cruz had planned wharf upgrades that included a "landmark" building on the section that fell in the drink. Now even the idea of simply restoring the missing part of the wharf, a \$14 million project, is up for debate.

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Bloomberg Opinion

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