

White Christmas week



Highway 9 above Boulder Creek in the Santa Cruz mountains became a snowy corridor Saturday as several snowfalls frosted the area. Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Local snowfall heralds holiday

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PAJARO VALLEY — What was forecasted to be a chilly weekend bringing low temperatures of 22 degrees also brought flurries of the stuff that white Christmases are made of. Areas all around the Pajaro Valley reported receiving at least light sprinklings of snow, while public works and power functioned practically problem-free.

Local fire and California Department of Forestry stations almost all reported receiving snow, but

also reported that they mostly got to keep warm inside their stations rather than venturing out into the winter weather. Call levels were surprisingly low over the weekend.

"It flurried three or four times during the day," said Captain Dave Herndon of the Aptos/La Selva Fire District of Sunday's weather. "At times, flakes were blowing in our eyes to the point where we almost needed goggles." Aptos' engines did not venture out of the garage at all on Sunday.

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CDF stations at Aromas, Corralitos, and Pajaro Valley all reported snow. "We got the four wheel emergency vehicle out just in case," said a spokesman at Corralitos.

The weather resulted in only one non-injury traffic accident on Sunday for Watsonville Fire Department at 2594 Freedom Blvd.

A spokesman for the National Weather Service confirmed Monday morning that there was snow "all over the place" in the Monterey Bay region. The snow disappeared once it hit the ground, though, accumulating only in regions above 1,000 feet.

The city of Watsonville Public Works Department had a quiet weekend, without problems such as frozen pipes that may accompany snowy weather. "I don't think it was quite cold enough, not like a few years ago," said Carl Johnson, equipment and facilities manager for Public Works.

Scott Blakey, spokesman for Pacific Gas and Electric, said that they are taking no chances with the unusual freeze. "We're keeping an eye on it," he said, noting that PG&E had been concerned about the weekend weather conditions since last Thursday. "Our emergency centers opened at 5 a.m. on Monday morning as pre-planned, but we don't anticipate any problems."

Blakey said that the biggest problem facing PG&E personnel during this type of weather is natural gas pressure. Excessive consumption of natural gas during chilly months may lead to a drop in the pressure of gas pipelines if not monitored closely by workers. "Natural gas has been adjusted at the pressure points," said Blakey, "and all of our gas people are on call."

The National Weather Service predicts sunny yet cold weather as the days get closer to Christmas. Highs in the upper 40s are expected for Monday and Tuesday, with overnight lows in the 30s on Monday and in the upper 20s on Tuesday.

The Arctic blast brought snow and chilly weather from Fresno to Eureka.

In Fresno, meteorologists recorded the first measurable amounts of snow in 30 years. And in the San Francisco Bay area, where the white stuff is as much of a rarity, residents Sunday also got a fleeting chance to revel in the winter wonderland.

Associated Press wire services contributed to this report.