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Mike McCollum

Santa Cruz County road crews work this morning to clear a huge slide that blocked Old San Jose

Road north of Soquel last night. Story, another photo on page 7.

# Big slide closes Old San Jose Road

## Soquel Valley area loses power

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

A colossal landslide, carrying tons of dirt, redwood trees and giant boulders, came rumbling down over Old San Jose Road last night, knocking down power lines and nearly burying two cars in its path.

California Highway Patrol Officer Bill O'Neill said the slide occurred at 9 p.m. about a quarter-mile from the Olive Branch bridge, almost the exact spot where another big landslide occurred in the 1989 earthquake. The road, he said, will remain closed for at least two to three days.

O'Neill said dogs were used to search the area to see if anyone was trapped under the rubble. The search was called off this morning after it was determined that no one was caught by the rushing debris.

The CHP said two vehicles were traveling on the road seconds before the side of the hill came crashing down. One car made it through the area moments before the slide; the other decided to stop before entering the area.

Several homes are near the slide, but they were not affected and are in no present danger, CHP said.

Capt. Christian Holm of the Central Fire District said the slide is about 100 feet long and in some areas is 20 to 40 feet



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**Veterinarian Janet Brennan and her dog, Eros, check to see if anyone was buried under the debris last night.**

high. Holm said one lane may be opened later today, but he was not sure who would be allowed in the area. Santa Cruz County road maintenance engineers were at the scene this morning to determine how to clear the road and whether residents would be able to use the road if a lane is cleared.

Heavy rain earlier this month is being blamed for softening the hill, Holm said. He said

rocks have been sliding down the hill onto the road for several days.

Old San Jose Road is closed from Laurel Glen and Olive Spring roads. Santa Cruz public works dispatcher Maureen Ryan said it could take two days to clear the debris, but chances are it could take up to a week before the road is opened again. "The whole side of the hill

came down, pretty much," Ryan said.

Power was knocked out to about 350 PG&E customers. This morning, power had been restored to about 100 customers, a PG&E representative said. But the remaining 200 customers will have to wait until the road is cleared and PG&E workers can erect new power lines.