

Storm victims, volunteers put things back together

By bits and pieces the fabric of life in Santa Cruz County is being rewoven as exhausted repair crews, working around the clock, make headway in the arduous job of restoring vital services to the stricken communities.

Things are beginning to edge toward a more normal state with the restoration of electrical power in most of the county and an abatement of the water problem in the Midcounty area, if not in Santa Cruz. With those services on the comeback, agency officials are beginning to deal with a myriad other problems such as sewage, public transportation, schools and public health.

In a move to keep rescue and reconstruction efforts from being hampered and roads from being clogged by sightseers, access into Santa Cruz County over Highway 17 has been closed to all persons except residents and workers, Capt. Don Anderson of the local Highway Patrol office said Wednesday.

Signs warning of the closure, which will be in effect from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. through Sunday, are in place at the Los Gatos end of the highway.

"The sole purpose of the roadblock is to prevent people who don't have legitimate business in the county from coming in," Anderson said.

County Administrative Officer George Newell said the problems already plaguing the county — food, water and power shortages — are being compounded by the "rubberneckers" out to catch a first-hand glimpse of the disaster.

"We don't have the resources to handle the sightseers," he said.

Broken sewer lines and flooded pumping stations have raised some concerns about public health.

Signs have been posted at two beaches in the county, warning surfers to stay out of the water because of possible contamination from raw sewage spilling into Monterey Bay.

Twin Lakes and New Brighton beaches have both been closed for a week, Newell said.

The measure was taken as a precaution, he said, because in any major rainstorm, there is

Routes number 70 and 71 from Watsonville to Cabrillo College, Capitola Mall and downtown Santa Cruz will be running every 30 minutes, with detours for roads that are closed.

The Capitola bus routes 57 and 58 will be running once an hour; and Live Oak service on lines 65, 66, 67 and 68 will also run once an hour. All bus routes are subject to some detours, Ross said.

Travel to Bonny Doon on the north coast and the San Lorenzo Valley is still restricted because of mudslides covering the roads.

Classes on the darkened campus of UC-Santa Cruz have been suspended the rest of the week, and the university staff has been urged to stay home.

Classes are expected to begin

Monday, which will be the first day of the winter quarter, postponed from this past Tuesday because of the storm.

University officials said the storm had done little damage to the campus, but the lack of power had shut down ventilation systems in some science buildings, making it necessary to lock them.

Superintendent of Schools Richard Van Deren said that all special education classes administered by the County Office of Education have been canceled for the remainder of the week.

The County Government Center in Santa Cruz is still closed to the public because of the water shortage in the city.

One Municipal Court judge is

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Water restored in Midcounty

While Santa Cruz and Live Oak still must contend with a critical water problem, water service in the Midcounty area returned to near-normal this morning.

Parts of Soquel and Capitola ran out of water at 4 p.m. Wednesday when the 1-million-gallon tanks on Crestline Way above Monterey Bay Heights finally went dry, as did the 300,000-gallon Pringle tank on the hillside above Bargetto's Winery earlier yesterday. These had been one of the only sources of water available that didn't require electrical pumps except to refill them.

Soquel Creek County Water District General Manager Robert M. Johnson said this morning that with pumps operating again, the district's storage tanks were two-thirds full by 8 a.m., and if the situation continues to improve, the district might be able to send some water into the nearby portion of the Santa Cruz City Water System that serves Live Oak.

Homes in the Hilltop and Crestline areas of Soquel were without water this morning because the pressure booster pumps that serve those neighborhoods were not

water for that storm-ravaged area is being supplied by two one-inch pipe lines. The six- and eight-inch lines that normally serve the area were destroyed by the flood waters.

"People should be very cautious about using water there because it is very limited," Johnson said. "But, hopefully, we can get another two-inch line there soon."

Pajaro Valley schools in the water district's service area have normal water supplies, Johnson said. However, the district has asked the Capitola and Soquel schools — part of the Soquel Elementary School District — to remain closed until Friday.

La Selva Beach came through the storm in good shape, Johnson said. The only serious problems there occurred Monday evening when a pipeline at Trestle Beach and Las Barancas washed out. It was repaired in a few hours.

The La Selva Beach area is the only portion of the Soquel Creek system with emergency power generators. The generators were installed several years ago when the area had an unreliable electrical system. Since then, Johnson

substantial recent matter from animals running down from streams and creeks.

Hundreds of septic tanks from homes along the San Lorenzo River were washed out in the rain, spilling raw sewage into that waterway, which opens onto the bay at downtown Santa Cruz.

For those who rely on public transportation to get around, Emery Ross of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District said that buses in the county will be running from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on somewhat revised schedules because of road closures.

Full service, where possible, will resume Friday, he said.

working, Johnson said.

The water district had been transferring water from the Seaciff area into Capitola and Soquel for the last two days, Johnson said, but abandoned the effort at 4 p.m. Wednesday afternoon when restaurants and homes in the Seaciff area began to run short of water.

Johnson said it was a question of priorities for the water district and the decision was made to keep the water in Seaciff because of the large numbers of Santa Cruz area residents who had flocked to restaurants and gas stations there.

The Rio del Mar Flats had water this morning, Johnson said, but

said, PG&E has improved the system and now it is one of the most reliable in the water district.

The district has purchased a military surplus generator that is capable of running the 100-horsepower well pumps in the Aptos-Soquel-Capitola area, but it is still being refurbished and can't be used, Johnson said.

He stressed that the water supply for the Midcounty is still "very tender" and urged residents throughout the district "not to use water for anything but essentials."

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