

✓ Weary counters, wary homeless survive census without incident

CENSUS 1990

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SANTA CRUZ — No incidents were reported between census takers and wary members of the street community early Wednesday morning, as the final phase of "S-Night" — short for "Street Night" — ended without incident at dawn.

"A lot of people are tired, I can tell you that," said Alan Majka, district census recruiter in Salinas said.

From 2 a.m. until dawn, census takers hit the streets, counting the homeless who sleep outdoors, on city streets and in illegal campgrounds.

The local head of the first-ever federal effort to count the homeless acknowledged the 200 or so workers assigned to the herculean task in Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey counties inevitably missed some.

"We know we didn't get every-

one," said Franca Gargiula, local district manager. "I know the (Census) Bureau is going to be thinking of other ways to do it better next time around."

One of those who insisted he was not counted was Jay Green, who was interviewed this morning at a table for the homeless set up near the U.S. Post Office at Front and Water Streets.

"If they go around counting heads that's OK, but they ask all sorts of personal questions," he said. "We don't want to cooperate with the government."

He said there were roughly a dozen homeless people at the table at various times during the night, and no one recalled seeing a census taker.

Gargiula said census takers were told not to disturb homeless people who were sleeping, so it may be that people like Green were counted without even knowing it.

She had no explanation for why the government chose to count the street population between the hours of 2 a.m. and 8 a.m.

"They were asked to count them from a distance," she said. "And write down how many people there were in a particular area, their sex, age and race if possible."

She said the homeless she encountered on the streets of Salinas welcomed the opportunity to talk and be counted.

She also acknowledged census takers were steered clear of the more remote congregations of homeless people camping illegally.

"Overall though, we're very pleased with the success of last (Tuesday) night," she said. "There were census takers who took it upon themselves to go back out onto the streets once they were done counting in their assigned areas. They said 'we think there's more out there' and kept on going."