

Earthquake - Watsonville - Rebuilding

Governor tours Watsonville



Diane Varni

From left, state Assemblyman Sam Farr, Watsonville Mayor Todd McFarren, Gov. George

Deukmejian, Assemblyman Rusty Areias from Los Banos, and state Sen. Henry Mello.

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Deukmejian says he's pleased with progress

By CHELA ZABIN
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Gov. George Deukmejian was in Watsonville this morning for a meeting with state and local representatives at City Hall and a tour of downtown and the Crestview trailer site.

The news media were not allowed into the meeting, but the governor held a brief press conference outside City Hall afterward.

Deukmejian said he had come to hear how the earthquake recovery was going and to see what other actions the state

might take to assist the earthquake-affected areas.

In general, the governor said he felt positive about the recovery.

"The recovery is moving much more quickly than in Whittier," he said, referring to a 1987 quake that damaged that city's downtown. "I'm very pleased with the reports I heard today."

After listening to local officials, Deukmejian said he's convinced that existing laws will have to be changed and new legislation will have to be intro-

duced in order to fill in the gaps in the recovery process.

As an example, Deukmejian said, he and 16 other governors will be joining together to ask that limits on federal relief funds to businesses and individuals be lifted. Those limits are not realistic in light of the costs in California.

But, he said, the "state can assist in bridging the gap" left by limited federal funds. The state can also help local governments in coming up with matching funds for state- and federally assisted projects.

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He said he believes the quarter-cent state sales tax increase will be sufficient to pay much of the state's earthquake assistance programs. But, he said, if that turns out not to be the case, additional funds will be found.

He also said that people who began but were discouraged for one reason or another from completing applications for aid will be contacted and informed of other programs they may be eligible for.

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Another problem, he said, that there was insufficient housing in some of the earthquake-ravaged areas to begin with, and he said that state would work with local agencies on planning for increased housing.

City Councilman Parr Eves said he brought the issue of schools losing money as a result of a drop in enrollment to the governor's attention, and that Deukmejian indicated he would help in that area. Assemblyman Sam Farr and Sen. Henry Mello also said they would work on that, he said.

Santa Cruz Supervisor Gary

Patton said he was generally pleased with how the meeting went, adding that the governor has promised more aid to the county if it turns out that money already allocated isn't enough. Patton said he was happy to hear that since the county will most likely indeed need more.

Patton handed the press a copy of the county's "laundry list" he presented to the governor. On the list were requests for a no-interest loan to the county, additional planners, building inspectors and geologists, funding for a sewer system at the fairgrounds and for repairs for the sewer system at the National Guard Armory, and for rebuilding and replacement of affordable housing.