

# Through rain, sleet and snow



Trini Mendez delivers mail to boxes along a white Braemore Drive, off Empire Grade in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Dan Coyro/Sentinel

## Brrrrrr, it's cold and wet outside

By STEVE PEREZ  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — 'Twas a few days shy of Christmas and all through the town, rain, snow, and ice, were flying around.

With apologies to C.C. Moore, author of the classic poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas," the storm front that brought chilly

winds and sporadic rains to the low lying areas of the county and snow to the mountain areas was more bluster than substance.

The most moisture reported was in Bonny Doon, where .58 inches of rain fell.

Snow flurries greeted morning commuters over Highway 17 and reports of scattered snowfall in the Santa Cruz Mountains per-

sisted throughout the day. The snow level ranged anywhere from 500 to 1000 feet above sea level.

People scurried to the mountain areas to play around in the stuff and chuck snowballs at one another.

Work crews from the Ben Lomond Youth Conservation Camp were told to call it a day around

11 a.m. because of fears the buses used to transport the wards would have trouble making it back to the Empire Grade Road headquarters.

"It was almost a blind snow," said youth counselor Mitchell Tullis. "It was snowing so bad (back at headquarters) you couldn't see anything but white

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Anthony Ruffo at Steamer Lane takes advantage of good surf kicked up by the chilly storm. Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

## Rain and snow hit area

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sheets."

"It did snow most of the morning and early afternoon," supervisor Ron Cannon said at 4 p.m. Wednesday. "It laid off a little bit and then came back between one and three. Right now, it's clear but windy. There's a cold wind blowing and the temperature is around freezing, in the low 30s."

In the city of Santa Cruz, Christmas shoppers spent the day dodging rain drops. The erratic weather conditions changed seemingly by the minute, one moment pouring down rain, the next, patches of blue sky clearly visible.

Throughout the day rainbows graced the sky all over the county, beginning with a brilliant ribbon that hung over Santa Cruz for a few minutes around 9 a.m. Rainbows were also reported in Scotts Valley, at UC Santa Cruz and in Watsonville.

Forecasters blamed the cold on an air mass plunging southward from Alaska, causing strong, gusty winds with near blizzard conditions in some Northern California mountain passes, the National

Weather Service said. Wind gusts reached 60 mph in the early morning along the north coast.

The weather service issued winter storm warnings for the mountains and advised drivers of icy and slushy roads.

No major problems were reported as a result, although department of Public Works dispatcher Maureen Ryan said some county roads, like Empire Grade and Highland Way, were being coated with sand as a precaution.

According to the Highway Patrol, units cruising over the Summit Wednesday night reported patches of black ice in both directions. The ice is so named because the sheets are so thin they are practically invisible, blending in with the roadway.

Highway 35 on the Santa Clara county side of the mountains was ordered closed by Caltrans for the evening, according to the CHP.

More chilly weather is in store for today and Friday, according to forecasters, with a chance of scattered showers decreasing late Thursday and increasing under

partly cloudy skies Friday. Highs temperatures are expected to be in the 40s.

### Area rainfall

Area rainfall reports for 24 hours ending at 6 p.m. yesterday and including the season's totals (since July 1) and those of last year at this time. Normal for Santa Cruz on this date is 8.70.

	24 hours	Season	'89 to date
Aptos	.16	2.78	3.47
Ben Lomond	.50	3.00	9.14
Bonny Doon	.58	5.10	8.20
Boulder Creek	.53	4.44	8.38
Capitola	.28	4.32	4.36
Happy Valley	.30	3.80	6.80
La Selva Beach	.20	3.14	na
Live Oak	.20	3.09	3.02
Natural Bridges	.22	3.39	3.45
Rio del Mar	.21	3.13	na
Santa Cruz	.23	3.00	4.25
Scotts Valley	.48	3.84	7.78
Soquel	.17	3.30	3.59
Swanton	.48	3.51	5.71
Watsonville	.18	2.26	3.34

na — not available