

# Finally, A Ray Of Hope For Private Roadways

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Government engineering teams will survey the county soon to determine how many closed private roads are eligible for federal aid.

The decision to send out teams was made Wednesday after county officials met with federal emergency officials and U.S. Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Monterey. The county's participation provides a mechanism for possible federal assistance.

The agreement is the first real ray of hope from government that the 35 communities cut off by the Jan. 4 storm will get some help in re-tying themselves to the general community.

Roads that comply with federal guidelines can get up to \$3,000 per isolated household (if it is habitable) to clear the

road. However, the federal government will not release that money unless the homeowner, county or state provides another \$1,000 per household.

The \$1,000 per household commitment has caused county government to be hesitant in joining the program and providing a local government mechanism to inspect the roads and acquire federal funds.

According to updated county figures, there are 35 neighborhoods cut off from direct emergency services, and along those closed roads are at least 1,124 isolated households.

More than 3,000 residents — 1.5 percent of the county population — probably are affected.

Acting County Administrator George Newell announced the county's decision this morning, saying that four teams will

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begin the road survey work within the next three days. His office, he said, will attempt to get the state to pay the \$1,000 that the federal government demands before it will spend its \$3,000.

In order to qualify, the neighborhood has to be isolated and the homes have to be habitable for the federal government pay the \$3,000 per unit.

Basically, the program is the alternative to the federal government paying for new housing for persons who are cut off from their homes.

Newell noted that the county cannot spend state gas tax funds for private roads. As for other funds the county could spend, Newell said the decision would have to be made by the Board of Supervisors.

Newell and Scott Martin, coordinator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's program here, said they think the survey will be completed within two weeks.

The agreement came after the county and federal officials met with Panetta Wednesday afternoon.

Panetta said this morning, "My hope is that the estimates for those who qualify are made quickly and we can get the tractors and the workers in there as soon as possible."

The congressman said after the meeting, "The problem I saw coming into this was what everybody was standing around worrying about the costs and nobody was going out and doing anything about the problem."

"It's understandable that the county, state and federal governments were concerned about the costs," Panetta said, "but when it's an emergency situation, where we must have access for safety; it has to be done — period."

The isolated areas and number of homes are as follows:

Riverdale Park area (100), Kings Creek and Two Bar (100-plus), Alba, Western, Forest (100), Lompico (100-plus), Wildwood, River Road, Band and Pleasant (60), Middle Ellen and Upper Zayante (50), Laurel Glen from Old San Jose Road (60).

Bean Creek (40-plus), Fairview Drive and Irwin Way (50), Forest Springs and Knob Hill (50), Marshall Creek and Hubbard Gulch (45), San Lorenzo Way and Rose Acres (22), Buzzard Lagoon (20), Deer Creek and Connelly Creek (30), Railroad Avenue and Riverside (30), Alta Via (25), Brook Lane Loop to Redwood (30), Felton Grove (40), Upper Fern Flat and Aptos View (20 plus).

Glenwood Drive (20 plus), East Chance Road (20 plus), Park Drive (20), Clear Creek (10), Mountain Street (15), Hazel Street (12), Bloom Grade (8), Buster Road (2), Hillside Avenue (2), North Street (3), East Hilton (5-plus), Davidson Way (8), Whitehouse Canyon (5), Hidden Falls, Girl Scout Camp (5 plus), Hidden Valley Ranch (3) and Love Creek (14).