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## Fairgrounds designated as emergency center

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FEMA mobile homes for earthquake victims continue to go up on three sites in Watsonville and Pajaro, including the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, which has been designated as a permanent site for handling future emergencies.

Crews have completed road improvements to the trailer park

site at the fairgrounds, where 35 pads have been set up in preparation for the trailers.

Sewage problems, a constant concern at the fairgrounds, are headed toward resolution as fair directors have been notified that their long-awaited hookup with the Salsipuedes Sanitary District is imminent.

"The first long-awaited flush is to be made May 1," John Keg-

ebain, vice president of the fair board, said.

The fair board has been trying to work out its sewage-disposal development problems since the early 1960s. Pressure to get the system on-line for the earthquake victims may have speeded up the process, board officials have said.

The state is reviewing the design of the proposed system, which, when installed, will equip

the site to serve as a permanent emergency center for future disasters. While services at other FEMA shelter sites are to be removed after the maximum 18-month period that trailers are occupied, fairground services will be permanent and ready to hook up to temporary homes at any time, Kegebein said. Past estimates have set the sewer-main connection fee at more than \$400,000.

The fairgrounds could handle as

many as 150 trailers, Luther Perry, head of Santa Cruz County's housing task force, said yesterday, but FEMA is now putting trailers up only as families are identified for them.

Priority for the fairgrounds trailers is going to those families who are now at the Buena Vista labor camp, FEMA representative Don Wegars said. The camp needs to be emptied soon for work on

sewer problems, which need to be solved before farm workers return this spring, Perry said.

The inclusion of a mobile home park on acreage used for parking during fair time has fair directors reviewing contingency plans for acquiring alternate parking land. Kegebein said negotiations will begin soon for acquiring property from nearby College Lake, which

See TRAILERS page 2 ▶

# TRAILERS

► From page 1

is drained each spring for crop production, as a backup parking lot.

The fairgrounds, which suspended its regular business when it began housing earthquake victims for the Red Cross, will begin normal operations Feb. 3.

Thirty-three trailers have gone up on the grounds of the St. Francis School, and most have been moved into, said Perry. Families had been assigned to the trailers there since before Christmas, although some of the trailers were reassigned when families failed to show up.

Eight trailers have gone up at the Southern Pacific yard in Pajaro and are occupied. There is space at the site for 22 trailers, Wegars said.

Plans to put up trailers at UC-Santa Cruz for a special site for seniors have been dropped, Perry said.

FEMA has said that it can find other alternatives for housing the seniors, many of whom were living in residential hotels like the St. George and Casa Del Rey in Santa Cruz that were destroyed in the earthquake.

The 43-trailer Crestview site, behind the Watsonville Municipal Court building, was the first to be completed and has been full for some time.

There are still a few problems to iron out at the sites, Perry said.

The play areas for children at the Crestview and St. Francis sites have yet to be completed. Last week, crews were still working on putting up a fence to keep small children out of the street at the Crestview site.

Other than that, things seem to be running pretty smoothly at the sites, Perry said. FEMA has a group of managers who check in at the sites each day.

Perry also noted that Watsonville, Pajaro and Hollister are the only places in the disaster area where FEMA has set up the temporary trailer sites. Everywhere else, he said, FEMA determined there was enough housing to absorb those who were displaced.

*Staff Writer Laramie Trevino contributed to this report.*