

## County handling Soquel fire dispatch

The Soquel fire department will become the second midcounty fire department to turn its emergency communications over to the county communications center in Santa Cruz.

Fire Chief Ray Negro said the switch will be made Jan. 12 if the telephone company can complete the phone service transfer.

The center now handles the emergency dispatching and telephone answering for the Aptos fire department.

For residents of the Soquel fire department, the emergency telephone number remains the same — 475-1262.

Negro said the change was approved by the district's directors earlier this month.

Under the present system, extensions of the emergency telephone lines are located in the fire station, in Hoppy's bar across the street, and in the homes of Negro and Asst. Chief Ernie Negro.

"We are now committed to have someone at the phones all the time," Negro said. If he and his brother want to be away from

their homes and the department at the same time — on a weekend for example — a volunteer is asked to stand by the fire station to answer the emergency phone.

Negro doesn't believe that's fair to the volunteer firemen who do not receive a regular salary.

When the new system goes into operation, trained dispatchers in the basement of the county governmental center will be answering all calls on the emergency line — just as they do now for the sheriff's department

and Aptos fire department.

"Hot" lines will be installed to the Negro homes, the fire station and a district-owned house behind the fire station that is rented to volunteer firemen.

If the phone isn't answered on the third ring, Negro said, the dispatchers will, by using a special radio signal, set off the department's siren, summoning volunteers to the station.

It will cost the department about \$240 a year to add the communication center to the de-

partment's emergency line. But the district now spends about \$230 a year to keep the phone in Hoppy's bar. That phone will be removed, cutting the total additional cost to about \$10 a year, Negro says.

The county will charge the district about \$2,000 a year for

the dispatching and radio repair services. But the department is now paying for limited dispatching and repair service — how much, Negro doesn't know for sure.

The department will still maintain its business phone in the fire station — 475-3118.