

# Schools frustrated by FEMA

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With the trailers on the Crestview site filled up, Callaghan Park emptied and the fairgrounds shelter population diminishing, officials at Leon Panetta's disaster task force meeting yesterday began to look at the people and agencies not taken care of in initial relief efforts.

James Baker, superintendent of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, talked about his frustration with the FEMA aid process. A whole parade of inspectors has come and gone through various district schools, each with a different opinion on the severity of damage to district property, and none with conclusive answers, he said.

Baker said that by the district's calculations, the earthquake caused about \$3 million in damage to the district's schools. The state Department of Education has agreed to pay \$1.5 million, but he's still waiting for a determination from FEMA on whether the federal government can make up the difference.

"How many more inspections will the schools need?" Leon Panetta asked an Army Corps of Engineers spokeswoman.

"If I'd known this was going to be brought up, I would have looked at the file," she said. She agreed to do so and get back to Baker.

Baker also expressed concern with the absentee rate in his district. The schools get reimbursed by the state for each day each student is in school.

Usually there's a drop this time of year, but the district figures enrollment is down an additional 70 students because of the quake. That's a loss of between \$600,000 and \$800,000, he said. And despite the drop in attendance, the school's operating costs remain the same.

The district has applied to the state board of education for help,

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but has so far only been granted money for the days school was closed after the earthquake and for the absentee rate two weeks later, he said.

He asked if it was possible to get some emergency legislation passed for longer-term aid to the school.

Baker also indicated the district's willingness to set up adult classes at the trailer sites, along with programs for children and teenagers.

"Schools have kind of been left out of the dialogue," Assemblyman Sam Farr said, noting that Baker's appearance was the first time anyone representing a school had attended one of Panetta's weekly meetings. He suggested that all the schools select a representative to come to the meetings and work together with the group on earthquake-related issues.

A spokesman for Cabrillo College also addressed the group, saying that the college's request to FEMA for help with asbestos abatement had been denied. The college figures it will take between \$3.5 million and \$5 million to remove its asbestos-laden ceilings, which let loose the dangerous particles during the quake.

The historic Sesnon House, red-tagged after the quake, is also a point of contention between FEMA and the college, partly over questions about how

it should be restored, he said. The cost of repairing the Sesnon House is between \$500,000 and \$1 million, he said.

Non-profit organizations are also having trouble, according to Ciel Benedetto of the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center. For one thing, many were confused when FEMA announced that it would extend its application deadline until Jan. 19. That extension applies only to individuals. The deadline for non-profit agencies is still Monday.

Non-profit agencies have been hard hit because funding sources have dried up and because many were forced to move from offices they'd been in for many years into more expensive space.

Others have had to move twice — once as an emergency measure, and again when more suitable long-term offices were found. FEMA is only helping to pay for one of the moves. Neither FEMA nor the Small Business Administration can pay to recover lost income or loss of funding sources.

Many of the non-profit agencies aren't eligible for FEMA funds, but were told that before they applied for aid. As a result, they don't have rejection letters from FEMA, needed in many cases before they can apply for aid elsewhere, Benedetto said.

FEMA official Bob Stevens agreed to work with Benedetto on getting the official rejection letters.

Farr suggested that the non-profit agencies work with the cities, which will be getting technical assistance grants to be used for community planning.

In other earthquake-related news:

● FEMA representative Stevens said he didn't know how long the Disaster Assistance Centers would be open — that would depend on how many people continue to apply for help. Applications are continuing to come in to the Disaster Applica-

tion Centers at a fairly steady rate. Thursday, 57 people applied for assistance at the Watsonville center; 67 applied at the Santa Cruz center. As of Thursday, 5,172 people applied in Watsonville; 4,422 in Santa Cruz. The eligibility rate for housing assistance is about 50 percent, he said.

● The 43 trailers at the Crestview site have been filled. Eight families are set to move to the Southern Pacific site in Pajaro. Twenty-two spaces have been prepared there, and trailers will be brought out as families are found eligible.

People may begin to move into the trailers at the St. Francis site as soon as Monday. As many as 33 units can be set up there.

Talks are continuing between FEMA, the state and the Salpuedes Sanitation District on the Fairgrounds site, which has run into a snag because of sewage problems. It will take about three weeks to prepare the trailer pads on that site once it's given the go-ahead, according to a representative from the govern-

nor's office.

The UC-Santa Cruz site, planned as a site for people over 65 only, has been delayed for now, because FEMA has determined the need isn't there for it, Luther Perry, head of the county's task force, said. Perry and County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello said they thought FEMA's determination was not accurate. Panetta asked that work begin on the site while the true need is determined.

● Work on the Struve Slough bridge is continuing around the clock, Caltrans official Mike Ellis said. In fact, many Watsonville residents have called police to complain about the noise caused by the steel pilings being driven in. Ellis said the night noise will probably continue for another two weeks.

● Charlene Shaffer, director of the Watsonville Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, said the chamber is concerned because the costs of the modular units set up for displaced downtown businesses aren't fully covered.