

Temperatures soar



Tarmo Hannula

Scores of people flock to Capitola Beach Monday as temperatures climbed into the 90s. Plenty of sun umbrellas stretched across the popular beach. It was 91 degrees in Watsonville.

Several area records broken by heat wave

By DAVID PACINI

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WATSONVILLE — A number of the area's high temperature records were broken Monday as a heat wave continued its grip on the Central Coast.

National Weather Service meteorologist Michael Mercer said this morning that a ridge of high pressure off the coast is buffering moisture away from the area, allowing temperatures to rise unabated.

Mercer said the phenomena was not related to El Niño or La Niña, and that about 10 or 15 high temperature records in the area were shattered. He also said that it is likely that more records will be broken today.

Watsonville recorded a high temperature of 91 degrees, measured at the city's Freedom Fowl Reservoir, but a lack of long term records at the facility made it impossible to determine if that was a record breaker for the city. The city also recorded a high temperature of 80 at the water treatment plant, where the average high temperature for the month of July is listed as 72. A record high of 85 degrees was recorded at the Panabaker Lane location in 1975.

In Santa Cruz, a temperature of 91 smashed a 90-year old record for the date, said Mercer.

State Parks spokesman Bob Culbertson said area beaches have been swamped with visitors. He also said beaches are fully staffed with lifeguard services and that no one has come close to drowning or been treated for heat stroke so far this summer.

"It's a great time to come to the beach and go swimming, except for finding a place to park," said Culbertson, who recommends weekday visits.

Thermometers popped all over Northern California as scorching temperatures toppled records, and forecasters provided little hope for relief until later in the week.

"It's going to be another murderous scorcher," said National Weather Service forecaster Dan Keirns of today's afternoon highs.

Hollister set a record for the date Monday with a high of 110. Other record highs included Gilroy, 109; Livermore, 107; Kentfield, 104; San Rafael, 105; Oakland airport, 97; Redwood City, 103; San Jose, 103; San Francisco, 86; and Santa Rosa, 106.

Elsewhere, it was 100 in Yreka, 104 in Stockton, 108 in Oroville, 110 in Redding and 104 in Lakeport. Looking for a cool breeze? It was just 63 in Fort Bragg.

San Jose's temperature was 8 degrees above the previous mark, set in 1975. The record in San Francisco also was 8 degrees above the previous high of 13 years ago.

The weather service predicted highs in the mid 60s to mid 70s along the coast today, jumping to the 90s to 105 in the mountains and coastal valleys and 100 to 113 in the hotter inland valleys. Temperatures were expected to be a few degrees cooler on Wednesday.

People around the Bay Area were affected by heat exhaustion Monday, including at least 30 examined at the Santa Clara

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County Fair. Authorities said a man and woman were treated in San Jose, a man riding a bicycle was treated after he collapsed in Palo Alto, two people were treated in Santa Rosa's Memorial Hospital and released and two people were hospitalized in Fairfield.

A spokeswoman at Watsonville Community Hospital said this morning that doctors have not had any emergency room admissions for people suffering from heat stroke or other temperature-related illnesses.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. reported record electricity use as air conditioners labored nonstop. At about 4:30 p.m. Monday, statewide use hit almost 23,000 megawatts, well above the 21,862 megawatt mark set last August, according to PG&E spokesman Jonathan Franks.

"It's a staggeringly huge number," Franks said.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District extended its Spare The Air declaration to today, urging people to leave cars at home and not use gasoline-powered yard equip-

ment.

There have been 10 Spare The Air days so far this season, which runs from June 1 to Oct. 2. Last year there were just three for the entire period.

In Contra Costa County, the heat touched off power surges that triggered false fire alarms, keeping firefighters busy.

"When you start seeing temperatures like these, things start breaking down," said Dave George of the Contra Costa Consolidated Fire District.

Barbara Hammer of Berkeley found one way to keep cool — she shaved her head. Before temperatures soared, she had chin-length auburn locks. On Monday, all that remained was a two-inch tuft on top, sticking straight up.

"It's my weather vane," she said. "I am really into sailing, and I need

to know which way the wind blows."