

A Slow Return To Normalcy

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Almost as if a giant finger let up on the hold button, life has returned to as normal as possible in Santa Cruz County.

Workers this morning dismantled the emergency operations center in the basement of the County Center and all county employees returned to their cubicles upstairs for the first time since they were sent home at the height of the storm a week ago today. Schools re-opened, with the exception of UCSC, which has delayed the start of its winter quarter until Wednesday, and all undamaged businesses opened their doors.

Search and recovery operations were on hold, however, in the Love Creek area of Ben Lomond, the site of greatest devastation and loss of life, after geologists surveyed the massive slide area over the weekend and declared the area unstable.

County Administrator George Newell announced this morning that residents of homes still standing near the slide area were evacuated Sunday after geologists determined a new slide might be developing downstream.

Search and recovery operations were suspended late Saturday as crews continued to run into water as they dug 10 feet into the mud.

Three more bodies were unearthed Saturday, bringing the Love Creek toll to five and the official countywide toll to 15 from the worst-ever storm to hit the county.

This morning, the office of Emergency Services identified the third victim found Saturday as Patricia Ann Nelson, 42, of 10971 Woodland Drive. The other two victims recovered Saturday previously were identified as Lester Eugene Rumrill, 47, and Yvonne Renee Blount, 32, both found in the wreckage of a home at 10945 Woodland Drive.

Newell said hydraulologists and geologists were due to return to the slide area today to try to determine when recovery operations can be resumed. It is believed four more bodies may still be found in other homes buried by the slide.

Newell said he didn't believe rescue crews would be allowed back in this week.

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Highway 17 was re-opened this morning to persons other than just county residents.

Sheriff's Sgt. Bruce Simpson announced that out-of-county deputies have been released but, he said, the Santa Cruz and Watsonville police departments are providing officers to boost patrols in the unincorporated areas to 22 men from the normal seven.

Looting, he said, has not and is not a major problem.

Saturday, a Felton man was arrested on suspicion of grand theft after property which washed away from a flooded home was found at his residence, said sheriff's reports.

Taken into custody on the felony charge was Jeffrey D. Scofield, 117 Gail Drive, Felton.

Also on hold was telephone service to some 1,900 customers in East Santa Cruz and elsewhere in the county as crews worked to restore cables lost during last week's storm.

Pacific Telephone said service to East Santa Cruz is not expected until at least late Tuesday.

Morris Allen, Santa Cruz city water director, today described the water situation as "much better, but still serious." (See story page 2).

Because of the improvement, Allen said industrial customers, such as the Wrigley and Lipton plants, would be allowed to re-open today, providing they cut consumption to half of their previous January levels.

Drought-level conservation measures are still in effect for both commercial and residential customers today, but Allen said some restrictions will be lifted Tuesday.

The only restriction Tuesday for residential customers, Allen said, will be a ban on all outdoor uses of water.

Restaurants, which had been ordered to use paper plates and plastic utensils, will be allowed to return to the use of regular table settings on Tuesday, Allen said. Because of the increased use of paper products, Allen said special refuse pickups for restaurants will begin Wednesday and will be free.

The news was not as good from the San Lorenzo Valley Water District, however, as district Manager Ed Steffani reported the main reservoir went dry. (See page 8 for SLV water conditions).

County crews continued to work to clear flooded and blocked roads in the county, but as of this morning 33 remained closed or open only to emergency traffic. (See page 2 for road conditions).

One of the busiest spots in the area this morning was the Veterans Hall on Front Street, where a variety of agencies prepared to handle the flood of storm victims seeking state and federal disaster relief.

The center was scheduled to open at 1 p.m. and remain open until 7 o'clock tonight. It will be open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and from

open at least through next week to assist victims with filing claims. He said the center can handle about 500 persons per day.

Because of the large number of claims expected, Newell this morning asked that persons with the most urgent needs go to the center first. All applications for aid must be made at the center.

Victims can apply for a variety of aid, ranging from immediate food, clothing and shelter to low-interest loans to repair homes or small businesses and unemployment benefits.

The most immediate financial aid, O'Rourke said, can be in the form of income tax returns based on casualty

losses, which can be included with 1981 returns.

Elwood Sturtevant of the Internal Revenue Service said staff will be available at the Veterans Hall to expedite returns and refunds. Persons with losses exceeding income, he said, can refile returns back three years. Assistance, he said, will be given to persons whose back tax copies were lost due to the storm.

The Small Business Administration has representatives at the center to assist homeowners rebuild. Home loans of up to \$50,000 are available at 8 percent interest, and personal property loans of up to \$10,000 are available at 16 percent interest.

Physical disaster and economic injury loans are available to owners of small businesses.

The Seniors Council has announced it will offer assistance to anyone 60 years of age or older by offering transportation to the center and escort service through the maze of application processes. Temporary housing, hot meals and clean-up services also are available by calling the Seniors Council at 688-0400.

As an aid to everyone needing to apply for services at the disaster assistance office, the city of Santa Cruz will offer unlimited free parking in the two-story lot on Front Street.

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