

# **Mello tries to reassure illegal aliens**

By LANE WALLACE  
STAFF WRITER

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Workers at disaster-relief centers are not asking people whether they're in the U.S. legally, State Sen. Henry Mello said at a meeting in Watsonville City Hall this morning.

FEMA and other relief agencies "are here to provide humanitarian aid," and are not interested in asking people about their residency or citizenship status, Mello said he's been assured.

Mello, who said undocumented workers are an important part of the Watsonville community, also said such people are not necessarily "home free," because the Immigration and Naturalization Service is still charged with enforcing immigration laws.

Mello said he's met with other legislators and officials of disaster-relief agencies, but not with INS officials.

Accompanying Mello was State Sen. Art Torres, who said he has asked the state director of Health and Welfare to declare the earthquake-damaged area a "manpower disaster area." Such a declaration could mean more help from state workers for Watsonville's relief effort, especially bilingual workers.

Mello said he plans to bring state senators to Santa Cruz and Watsonville by bus Nov. 3 to show them the damage the area has suffered.