

# Storm of '82 was on-the-job training

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When Dave Leslie — a graduate of Humboldt State University — took on the job last December as the only planning geologist for Santa Cruz County, little did he know his work would literally be cut out for him by a devastating act of Mother Nature three weeks later.

The slides and flooding that struck Santa Cruz County in early January have made Leslie a very busy man.

"It's been crazy," commented Leslie, 30, who would like to eventually find some time to work on his master's of science degree from UCSC.

It is Leslie's task to determine the geologic stability of land — and whether or not more geologic work needs to be performed — before a permit for repair, construction or reconstruction can be issued by the county building department.

And what the January storms brought to light probably more than anything else is the potential for geologic instability in areas throughout Santa Cruz County.

In the days immediately following the storm, Leslie said all permits on storm-damaged parcels were under his review.

"There were uncouncted numbers of permits I looked at and made decisions on whether a geologic review was necessary," Leslie recalled.

County watershed analysts and building inspectors worked in teams to issue emergency building permits for the immediate repair of storm-struck properties, on the condition the property owners apply for regular permits within three months.

"Some have and some haven't," commented Leslie.

Leslie said he and other planning staff devoted a full month to study of the Love Creek area — one of the hardest hit by tragedy in the storm.

For a number of weeks following the storms, Leslie performed 150 inspections at no cost to property owners so that repair work could get underway.

About 400 of these "free" inspections were also performed by county watershed analysts, said Leslie.

Since January, about 250 property owners — a record number — have paid \$75 apiece for a "geologic hazards review" performed by Leslie.

In cases where there is a geologic hazard on the site, a permit will not be issued until such a review is completed.

In some cases, Leslie recommends further testing by a private geologist before a permit can be dispensed.

If there is a potential for geologic hazard on the property, the property owner must sign a waiver which is recorded at the office of the County Recorder.

In the waiver, the property owner assumes all risks from geologic hazards. Also, said Leslie, the document alerts future home buyers about potential hazards, and lets county officials know the owner of the property is aware of any geologic hazards.

The waiver is a standard form that has been used for many years, said Leslie, but never as much as it has been this year.

Leslie stressed the "need for property owners to be aware of geologic hazards," particularly now that there is so much development in steep, forested terrain.

"A lot of problems further down the road can be avoided," maintained Leslie.

Maybe when his workload lightens up, he can get back to work on his masters thesis on the study of a watershed in Redwood National Park in Humboldt County.

This year, he has been too busy working to work on it

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