

Heavy rains, high tides

Storm warnings posted

By PAUL BEATTY
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A storm threatening heavy rains and high surf moved into Central California today bringing a warning from the National Weather Service that coastal residents should be prepared "to protect life and property."

It could be the worst coastal storm of the season, according to the weather service. "This major storm system should not be underestimated," said a bulletin issued by the weather service.

High tides and heavy surf began to hit the coast late this morning, but by press time, had not caused the extensive damage of earlier storms.

Santa Cruz' West Cliff Drive was hit the hardest as the waves gouged the cliffs, washing away more of the sidewalk in the David Way and Columbia Street area.

Residents were told they might have to evacuate as the waves pummeled the street. No evacuation order was given, but West Cliff Drive was closed to traffic.

Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf stayed open and Capitola's storm-damaged wharf survived this one very well.

Santa Cruz Wharf Supervisor Bill Eisele said the saving factor was that the 22-foot waves came in from the northwest and were spending their energy against Lighthouse Point.

By noon, as concern over the tidal onslaught was over, attention turned to the mountain regions where county officials were issuing mudslide and flash flood warnings if the storm came in as heavily as predicted.

A crane was dispatched to the Bear Creek Road area to attempt stopping a mudslide that was threatening a home.

In Felton, residents of six homes along Farmer Street were advised to live elsewhere until the rains stopped in case a mudslide that damaged two neighbor homes would be triggered again.

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Heavy weekend rains into Sunday caused an earthen dam in the White Road area of south county to give way sending "a wall of water" rushing toward the Barbara Griffin home on Halton Lane.

It never hit the home as it was diverted down Nunes Road, but it gave the mother and her daughters Kimberly, 24, and Samantha, 17, a one of the shocks of their lives.

"My daughter Kimberly was looking out the window and heard a roar. She called my other daughter and then both girls screamed.

"It was just like the movies, all you can see is this wall of water."

The county Public Works Department said the only confirmed damage was that White Road was closed for a time.

Over in the Redwood Drive area off Glen Canyon Road, the neighborhood "looked like a disaster area" after the heavy rains, according to resident Lois Hughes.

"It's unbelievable, we're only six minutes from downtown Santa Cruz and we look like a disaster area. It makes the storm of '82 look like a church picnic in this area."

The weather service said, "This storm will produce heavy rain which is likely to cause flooding problems in many sections of Central California today."

Felton Fire Chief John "Mac" McDonnell said if the rain dumps as much as four inches in two to three hours there will be trouble in the Valley.

The weather service was predicting one inch for San Francisco and two to three inches for the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Snow was expected above 5,500 feet and a winter storm watch was issued for the Lake Tahoe Basin and the Sierra. Gale warning were posted for boaters as 50-knot winds were expected.

More storms are expected throughout the week.

It was the third storm in the system and caused a tornado that ripped the top off a

house in Santa Rosa Sunday.

Most Santa Cruz County roads were open, but Highway 9 remained closed between Santa Cruz and Felton as a mudslide Friday closed the road at Paradise Park.

Rainfall reports for 24 hours ending at 8 a.m. today and including the season's totals (since July 1) and those of last year at this time, are as follows:

	24 Hrs.	Season	Last Year
Santa Cruz	.47	32.11	32.85
Felton	1.20	56.78	54.66
Bonny Doon	1.03	61.43	61.59
Capitola	.94	39.64	34.53
Aptos	.21	29.77	31.65
Ben Lomond	1.20	66.72	
Pine Flat	1.63	80.86	72.85
Watsonville	.18	28.97	27.94
Graham Hill	.75	47.10	45.73
Corralitos	.39	36.58	36.56
Happy Valley	.39	36.58	36.56
Lompico	2.00	79.80	69.70

Reporters Jamie Marks and John McNicholas contributed to the story