

# Word getting out slowly to Latino quake victims

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WATSONVILLE — Federal and state relief is on the way, but many of the Spanish-speaking Watsonville residents left homeless by the big earthquake last week are just beginning to learn of it.

While city officials have been trying to cope with the disaster, much of the Latino community who lost their homes in central Watsonville have been slow to learn of the help that's available.

In a rally Friday in the City Plaza sponsored by a candidate for City Council, Latino residents heard firsthand where they can go for help.

The informational rally was put together by Salud Para La Gente Health Clinic and Oscar Rios, a community activist and council candidate for District 2 (downtown).

The rally also drew the likes of state Assemblyman Sam Farr, who addressed the large crowd in Spanish, Pajaro Valley Supervisor Sherry Mehl, and several city officials.

According to the Red Cross Saturday, some 184 Watsonville homes were destroyed in the quake and aftershocks that rocked the region last week, and another 214 suffered major damage. More than \$100

million property damage was sustained.

City Manager John Radin said 95 percent of the mobile homes at Rancho Cerritos Mobile Home Park were knocked off their foundations, and virtually half of the mobile homes in the city's other three mobile-home parks were similarly hurt.

Because of the pressing need for housing, Mayor Betty Murphy said she has asked Gov. George Deukmejian and President George Bush for long-term shelter.

"Maybe we can get some mobile homes or something," she said.

The city was already 1,500 housing units short of what it needed before the quake hit, Murphy said. Now, the housing crisis is even more severe.

Many of the displaced families have chosen to live outside in tent cities. The crowd at City Plaza was told that more tarps are on the way from Fort Ord.

City officials have brought in water trucks to the tent cities and even had a mobile Burger King at the plaza, serving meals to the hungry.

"We have a new challenge to find homes and permanent shelter and clothing for all of you," Fire Chief Gary Smith told the City Plaza crowd.

"We're working on getting more

supplies and tents for you. While it might not seem like we care, we do. I just wish we could get you into a permanent way of life that will make you happier and safer," he said.

Several people complained about local stores price gouging during the disaster. One man said a package of chicken went for \$9.

City officials said the District Attorney's office has vowed to go after businessmen who take advantage of the crisis and asked that any complaints be forwarded to City Hall.

Showers are coming to the tent cities and bathrooms are already available at several sites.

City officials urged the homeless to seek shelter at the National Guard Armory on Aviation Way, Veteran's Hall on East Beach Street and Salvation Army on Union Street.

Mayor Murphy added the high school may be open on Tuesday, adding another possible site for a shelter.

Murphy said she didn't realize until the rally that so many people didn't know about the help that's available.

Although some community groups have already set up information tables at the city plaza, Murphy said the city may move to do the same.