

# Harbor reopens some docks as financial toll hits \$26.5M

Harbor - 2000  
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DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Jody Connolly watches his sunken boat — and home — being dragged from the Santa Cruz harbor Monday. Connolly lived aboard his boat before the tsunami surge ripped it from U dock and sank it in the harbor.

SANTA CRUZ — The Santa Cruz Port District's top official fully or partially reopened 21 of the tsunami-battered harbor's 26 docks late Monday afternoon even as estimates of the financial toll stemming from Friday's surge rose to \$22.5 million, not including the \$4 million damage to private boats.

Port Director Lisa Ekers, who revised the estimate from \$17 million after more inspections were completed Monday, said crews will continue working today to remove

sunken boats from the harbor waters, which will remain closed to vessels through Sunday under emergency orders from the harbor and U.S. Coast Guard. Meanwhile, Coast Guard and state Fish and Game officials will resume efforts to absorb fuel spills from the wreckage using containment boom and evaluate any other environmental impacts as submerged boats are pulled upright.

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## HARBOR

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"We still have a lot of debris removal to do," Ekers said. "Hopefully around the same time we are able to reopen for vessel traffic we will be out of emergency orders."

The acting secretary of California Emergency Management Agency, Mike Dayton, toured the harbor with Ekers and Mayor Ryan Coonerty on Monday, and field teams from the state and federal emergency management agencies are expected to begin damage assessments today. Dayton estimates that statewide damage from the tsunami will exceed \$40 million, including the millions in damage caused in Crescent City.

Ekers said the state will reimburse up to 75 percent of the harbor's response and cleanup costs, and FEMA would pick up 75 percent of what's left, leaving the harbor to cover about 6 percent.

Ekers said the new damage estimate includes the anticipated cost of rebuilding docks and other infrastructure. She said the Port Commission, which governs the harbor's \$6.7 million annual budget, will study how to pay for the repairs, though there is some cash assistance from the federal government available.

### BACK TO THE SURFACE

Using a crane and backhoe, recovery crews contracted by the Port District spent Monday lifting two destroyed vessels out of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor, where powerful surges stemming from Friday's earthquake and tsunami in Japan sunk 18 boats and damaged more than 100 others. Two boats previously listed as missing were discovered Monday upright in other parts of the harbor, leaving 10 vessels unaccounted for and possibly lost at sea.

Fish and Game Warden Patrick Foy said environmental impacts have been minor, with no detectable impact on

fish or other wildlife.

"We've been very lucky," Foy said.

Ekers reopened 14 docks Monday to live-aboard customers whose power has been restored. Seven other docks on the harbor's southeast end will have limited access from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. as inspections continue and crews work to restore power. Other docks will remain closed until further notice.

Ekers said the estimate of private property damage is \$4 million, though she expects that number to grow as inspections continue. She said the harbor will work quickly to repair docks so that customers have a secure slip to store their vessels, which provides a key revenue stream.

"We're concerned about every dock at this point," she said. "Every dock is damaged, some worse than others."

Cheryl Bellrose of Fairfield, who bought a 30-foot Sea Ray Sedan Bridge two years ago for her son to live aboard, watched in tears as a recovery crew yanked the cracked vessel up the boat launch. Besides a couple of computers and TVs, as well as clothes and surfboards that were damaged when the boat overturned, Bellrose mourned the loss of a bell attached to the back of the boat.

"It's not there now," Bellrose said of the bell given to her by a dear friend who died last month. "I was going to take her family out to the ocean to put flowers out there for her. I wanted to do something special."

### TAKEN A TOLL

The emotional ripple effect from last week's tsunami was still strong Monday as vessel owners and sympathizers gathered at picnic tables above the boat launch to watch crews recover boats between intermittent rain showers. Some owners, like Bellrose, had insurance; others didn't.

Some were lucky to see only a scratch or dent. Others lost everything when U Dock, home to a tight-knit community of on-board residents, broke away during the waves that rolled through the harbor

nine hours after the tsunami hit Japan.

Jody Connolly, a hardwood floor contractor who moved onto the boat bought by his mom, left under an evacuation warning early Friday morning. He watched his boat survive an initial wave, but a second, more powerful surge pushed his boat against a neighbor's, tossed it around and sunk it.

"That sound is the worst," Connolly said as Fiberglas from the boat's bottom crunched when a backhoe tried to tug the boat up into the harbor parking lot, which has become a temporary home for recovered vessels.

Although the harbor remained closed Monday, boat owners are being allowed to view damage to their property.

"Everyone is trying to be as accommodating as possible," Foy said.

John and Fran Battendieri of Soquel saw their crabbing boat Jersey Girl, which was docked next to Connolly's on U Dock, for the first time after arriving home from a visit to Southern California. The Bertram hauler was saved from destruction after it floated under the Murray Street bridge and into another slip.

"We dodged a bullet," John Battendieri said.

Todd Johnson, another U Dock neighbor, did not.

His boat, a Canadian-built Tanzer 28 called Windhover after a Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem of the same name, was not insured. Windhover is still floating upright, but Johnson expected the boat to be a total loss because it is full of water and covered in mud and diesel fuel.

Johnson, who lived aboard for much of the last five years and estimated his loss at between \$15,000 and \$20,000, was able to get clothing and a laptop out of the damaged vessel. He said harbor officials were doing a good job of recovering what they could.

"They've never dealt with this; it's a steep learning curve," he said. "But it looks like a lot of progress is being made."