

EARTHQUAKE '89 - San Lorenzo / Summit

✓ Trailers may be loaned to some mountain residents

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SANTA CRUZ — Some homeless people in the mountain areas may be eligible for government-supplied trailers to allow them to stay on their property, the head of the Housing Recovery Task Force said Saturday.

"If other temporary housing just won't work, they can work with (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) to get trailers placed on their parcels," Luther Perry told U.S. Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Monterey, at a meeting of the coalition of city and government housing agencies at the County Government Center.

But there are a lot of "ifs" attached to the offer.

"If they have a parcel where one of the trailers will fit, if other housing alternatives won't work for them, and if there's a safe and proper location to put the trailer," Perry said. "There are certain areas in the

county where there are geology concerns — FEMA doesn't want to put trailers there."

Live Oak-Soquel Supervisor Jan Beautz asked if people who have been refused permits to rebuild would qualify for FEMA trailers, and Perry said no.

"FEMA has been saying no, a flat no, period no," he said.

Perry said that the biggest "if" in the mountains is whether the trailer can be transported to the site. Measuring 12 by 62 feet, the trailers are not transportable on winding mountain roads. Once that hurdle has been cleared, the parcel has to be large enough to hold the trailer without interfering with construction or repairs, he said.

"FEMA has a standing policy that any trailers are the last resort," he said. "People must first try to find a place to rent and show that they can't find one."

The county and the Lion's Club in the San Lorenzo

Valley and Scotts Valley have been looking into ways to supply travel trailers to some people where it's physically impossible to locate a FEMA trailer, he said.

"Every other alternative identified at this time will require people to leave their property and live somewhere else," Beautz said.

Perry said that he would ask FEMA officials to look into the possibility of allowing someone to place a trailer on borrowed land, like a neighbor's property, and to place trailers wherever the county has issued emergency permits for rebuilding.

While a "last resort" Perry said, the trailers may be a resort that is necessary for a lot of people in rural areas.

One little-known FEMA fact, he said, is that the agency won't require a family to relocate if it means making their children change schools or if it makes their transportation situation much worse.

"Which means that if you lived on the summit and you work over the hill and kids go to C.T. English Middle School, FEMA is not going to make you move to Santa Cruz," he said. "And if you've looked but can't find a place to rent up in the area right now, they'll consider a trailer."

Perry said one hint for dealing with FEMA is to be specific about family needs instead of just going in for the check.

"FEMA wants to just write you a check when you go in," he said. "If people want something else, they have to push for it a little bit. If taking the check isn't going to solve the family's problems, they've got to push, and most people don't like to do that."

The Disaster Assistance Centers will pack up and leave Dec. 18, when the deadline for applying for FEMA assistance runs out, and Perry urged people to apply for assistance immediately.