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Watsonville took the brunt of the quake

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In terms of the number of homes destroyed in last week's earthquake, Watsonville has clearly suffered the most of any area in Santa Cruz County, Red Cross and city statistics show.

Out of 593 residential buildings countywide destroyed outright in the Oct. 17 quake, which has

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been upgraded from a 6.9 to a 7.1 magnitude, 304 are in Watsonville, according to Red Cross and Watsonville tallies.

Included in the 304 buildings are 195 single-family homes, 106 mobile homes and three apartment buildings. No one could say how many units were in the apartment buildings, although a city memo written Monday estimates the city needs to replace 425 dwelling units altogether.

By contrast, Santa Cruz had 55 single-family homes destroyed, and nine apartment buildings. No mobile homes were destroyed outright there.

The remaining 225 destroyed homes in the Red Cross tally are scattered around the unincorporated county, Capitola and Scotts Valley, said Hope Tuttle, Red Cross spokeswoman.

Tuttle said her agency's figures were "very preliminary" and probably didn't include all destroyed homes. For instance, probably few of the many severely damaged homes in the Corralitos area, many of which are up roads still nearly impassable, have been counted.

Of 989 homes countywide that sustained major damage — the kind of damage that renders a home uninhabitable until repaired — 487 are in Watsonville, including 235 single-family homes, 234 mobile homes and 18 apartment buildings.

Santa Cruz figures for homes that sustained major damage are 133 severely damaged single-family homes, 20 mobile homes and five apartment buildings.

"We generally feel Watsonville

had more general devastation than Santa Cruz," said Ron Fahl, a spokesman for the city of Santa Cruz.

The Santa Cruz County total of 1,582 homes destroyed or seriously damaged show this county suffered slightly more major property damage than San Francisco, where many homes in the Marina district were destroyed. The San Francisco Red Cross said this morning that 1,151 homes had been destroyed or seriously damaged there in the Oct. 17 quake. The figures for San Francisco have not been broken down into destroyed vs. seriously damaged, as they have been here, a Red Cross spokeswoman there said.

As to how many people are homeless in South County, it is difficult to say. Last night, the Red Cross sheltered 722 people in the Watsonville area and another 26 at the Nestle plant in Pajaro. By contrast, 267 people in Santa Cruz stayed in Red Cross shelters. Throughout the rest of the county only 32 people stayed in shelters last night.

Watsonville Mayor Betty Murphy said yesterday the city has "no idea" how many people are unable to return to their homes. Many displaced people are not in shelters, but are staying with friends and relatives, she said, and no agency has any tally of how great their numbers might be.

She also said that while some of the houses destroyed in Watsonville may have sheltered multiple families, other houses, particularly in the Lincoln and Jefferson area, were inhabited by widows who lived alone.

Murphy also said Pajaro residents may be staying in Watsonville shelters, inflating the estimates of how many Watsonville residents are homeless.

Murphy also noted that it is not just Hispanic people who are afraid to return to buildings that have been pronounced safe by the experts.

"There are people in Bonny Doon with two incomes who are sleeping outside," Murphy said.