

Downtown business boosted by union donation to cities

EARTHQUAKE '89 - Santa Cruz City

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SANTA CRUZ — Officials of Operating Engineers Local 3 on Monday donated \$25,000 each to the cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville for earthquake relief.

Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt accepted the Santa Cruz donation and quickly turned it over to Downtown Association President Louie Rittenhouse. The union had earmarked the money to help defray the cost of businesses operating in temporary pavilions.

"We see this as the union's contribution to getting the business community back on its feet. Revenue in the city of Santa Cruz is highly reliant on downtown business," said Tom Stapleton, the union's business manager.

The union represents about

31,000 workers in Northern California, Nevada and Hawaii. That number includes some 7,500 public employees.

The Operating Engineers represent heavy-equipment operators, many of whom are working on the mall demolition. Union members also worked to clear Highway 17.

The donation was gathered from the Operating Engineers' Credit Union, the Foundation for Fair Contracting and the California Highway Committee.

The Watsonville donation was gathered from the union, the Hawaii Operating Engineers Stabilization Fund and the California Highway Committee.

Displaced shopkeepers have begun putting up signs and getting ready to move their stock into the dome-like structures, erected in city parking lots along Cedar Street.

The new shops will be open on Friday, the traditional first day of the Christmas-shopping season.

Rittenhouse praised local unions which volunteered their efforts to erect the pavilions. "The factory said it would take seven days to

build them. The union guys came in and in two days they were done. The factory representatives walked away shaking their heads," he said.

"Without the help of the unions we wouldn't have made it for the start of the Christmas season," Rittenhouse said. He also praised the efforts of PG&E and Pacific Bell for expediting hookups.

The money for Watsonville has not been earmarked, said Business Representative Barbara Cullinane.