

Get off the Summit's back



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel file

Rebuilding Summit-area homes like this one is a 'bureaucratic nightmare,' a supervisor says.

Earthquake San Lorenzo Valley - Summit Rebuilding Two supervisors want geologic rules relaxed

By GUY LASNIER
Sentinel staff writer

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SANTA CRUZ — Enough is enough, two county supervisors have decided.

Requiring extensive soils and geologic reports to rebuild earthquake-damaged homes in the Summit area is becoming "overly burdensome and is overshadowing the emphasis on helping people," supervisors Jan Beutz and Fred Keeley wrote in a letter dated Monday.

They asked their colleagues to let Summit-area residents come under the county's existing geologic hazard ordinance when they apply for rebuilding permits.

After the Oct. 17 quake, hazard zones were established, in which testing must be done before rebuilding is allowed.

The issue of ground tests costing tens of thousands of dollars has infuriated Summit residents. They complain they get tests done only to be told they need more tests. Some-

times they are told they won't get a permit until a neighbor gets his tests completed.

"We've had it," said Ellen Meyer of Skyview Terrace. "It's been almost 11 months."

Planning Director Dianne Guzman said she was not aware of any building permits having been issued to Summit properties since the quake.

Keeley said the situation has become a "bureaucratic nightmare."

Instead of trying to help property owners get back on their feet the county "throws huge roadblocks in the way," Beutz said Tuesday.

"It seems like anyone who has any questions has to go through full-blown geology reports," she said.

Beutz and Keeley said that different rules have developed since the quake involving different areas of the mountains. "It's time to put everyone under the same rules," Beutz said.

The two supervisors said it doesn't appear

to be necessary to maintain various zones "when there has been no indication since the earthquake that further movement has occurred within these areas," they wrote.

The county's existing ordinance provides adequate protection, Beutz said. Under the ordinance, homes sustaining less than 50 percent damage based on the cost of replacement would be exempt from geologic reviews. Using the current ordinance would allow minor problems to be taken care of and let county staffers and contract geologists concentrate on the more major problems.

Keeley put the item on Tuesday's agenda for action then pulled it off, saying he wanted to give the other supervisors more time to consider the request. The board will take up the issue next Tuesday.

A long-term geologic study is being conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers. The study is running late but a preliminary report is due sometime next month.