

Earthquake 1989 - Geological

Aftershocks make beaches dangerous, geologists warn

By Tom Philp
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Those scenic, remote beaches with the dramatic bluffs along Highway 1 may not be safe during an aftershock, so geologists are warning tourists to stay away from the coastal areas rocked by last week's earthquake.

The quake loosened bluffs in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties, sending rocks tumbling to the beaches below. The falling debris killed one man in Davenport, north of Santa Cruz.

"We've seen widespread failure along the bluffs," said Gary Griggs, a geology professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz and the author of a book on California's coastline. "I think people should be cautious because there's probably loose material left that could be triggered by large aftershocks."

"Many of these beaches are unsafe to approach from the bluffs, like a lot of tourists do," said geologist William Brown, chief of the Landslide Information Center at the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park. "And the

bluffs obviously are a dangerous place to be sitting under for a picnic or day at the beach."

Until the aftershocks appear to be over, and until geologists and government officials can assess the stability of all the bluffs, people should stay off the scenic lookouts. That could take several weeks, Brown said.

Neither Brown nor a Santa Cruz County parks and recreation official knew of any Santa Cruz beaches that had been closed because of bluffs' instability.