

nddaughter Noel.

Quayle made a surprise visit for a break-
fast of sausage patties and eggs.

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Quake fault threatens area elementary school

By JAMIE S. CACKLER

Sentinel staff writer

SUMMIT — Loma Prieta School, the elementary school that narrowly escaped destruction in the Lexington fire of 1985, will be partially evacuated within the next week because of a newly discovered earthquake fault running under a classroom wing.

The entire school may have to be abandoned if more faults are found when a second fault study is done in mid-February, Gayle Shank, assistant to the superintendent, said Thursday.

The Loma Prieta District Board of Trustees voted Tuesday to shut down the three-classroom "A" wing at the rear of Loma Prieta School after the state washed its hands of liability following a geological survey of the grounds, Shank said. Nearly 90 children in three classrooms — two kindergarten and one third grade — will be affected immediately.

Shank said school officials have no idea what they will do if the school must be abandoned. Superintendent Kenneth Simpkins was in Sacramento Thursday asking the state about the district's options.

No quake-fault study had ever been done on the 37-year-old school, which serves 350 children, Shank said.

The new study was ordered by the state this fall after the Simpkins applied to the state for money to refurbish the oldest building at Loma Prieta School, a V-shaped wing of classrooms and offices near the front of the school, built in 1951. Applying for the remodeling money "opened this can of worms," Shank said.

A Santa Cruz-based surveyor, Rogers-Johnson, sent a team up to dig five fault-survey trenches. "By

trenching, they can tell by looking at the soil and topsoil approximately when the earth has moved, and they can also tell where it seems to be moving," Shank said.

Five of the seven trenches clearly revealed the directions of two fault lines at the rear of the school — one of which cuts right through the "A" wing of classrooms.

Two other fault lines were found, but the place the trenches were dug didn't clearly reveal the direction of the lines. But the approximate direction puts the lines ominously near at least two buildings, possibly right under every single major building at the elementary school, Shank said.

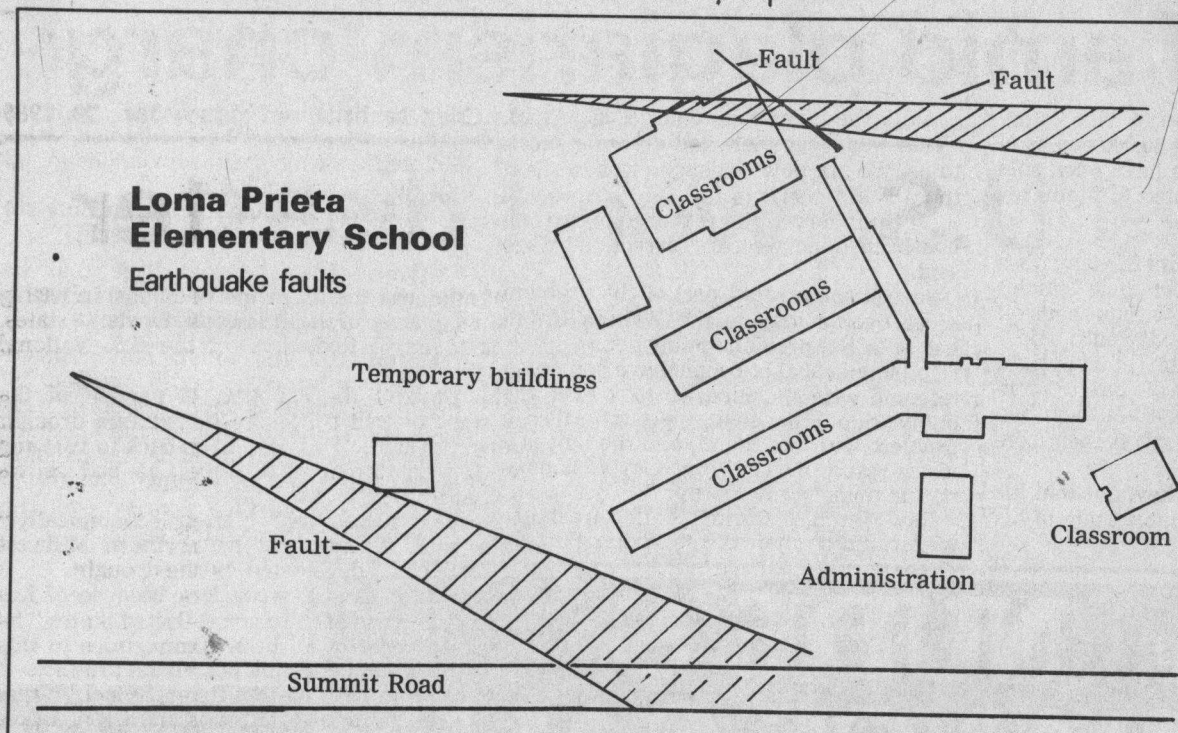
Therefore, the surveyors are being called back the weekend of Feb. 15 to dig more trenches to see how many buildings are threatened. Shank said it's possible the entire school will have to be abandoned.

Notices were sent home to parents this week notifying them of the startling changes. A schoolwide forum is scheduled for Tuesday night in the new Community Room at the district's nearby C.T. English Middle School.

Representatives of the surveyors will be present, as will a Los Gatos contractor who has worked with the school. Shank said a representative of the Office of the State Architect also may come.

Emergency employee meetings were called Wednesday and Thursday so the staff could decide where the immediately affected classes would be moved. The classes would displace other supplies and services, creating a domino effect of moves at the school.

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School/ Classes in doubt

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The superintendent asked employees to put in extra time — with pay — to help in the move over the weekend, and urged them to round up parents and other volunteers to assist.

Meanwhile, Superintendent Simpkins himself was in Sacramento on Thursday.

Shank said Simpkins is "getting information on emergency portables and clarifying our rights on this matter." He is trying to find out if the state will send the school emergency portable classrooms, and if the school is entitled to any financial aid, especially if the whole school is to be abandoned, she said.

The school has never been affected by quakes, so why move? It's the question many parents and employees have been asking, Shank said.

She noted that most area residents have a skeptical attitude toward the danger represented by fault lines since the notorious San Andreas Fault runs right through the entire area.

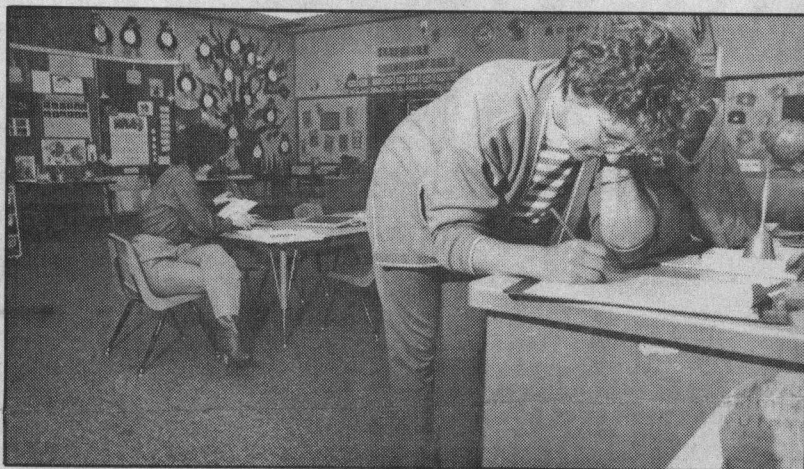
But, Shank said, the School Board faces both moral and practical dilemmas.

Children's lives could be at stake. "Could any of us live with ourselves if something happened?" Shank asked.

Furthermore, after the report came out, the state "put us on notice — that's what they call it — that we could keep the school open, but the local school board was liable," Shank said.

As the superintendent explained to employees in a memo Wednesday, the state notified the board that "continued use of the building is at the risk" of the board members. They could lose their present and future personal assets in a disaster, Shank said.

"Common sense tells us nothing will happen," Shank said. On the other hand, she said she can't ignore earthquakes all around the



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Kindergarten teachers Linda Smith, right, and Diane Hintz at Loma Prieta Elementary School.

state. "Look at Los Angeles. They just had a 5.0 (on the Richter scale). They're rockin' and rollin' down there."

She said she has spoken to about 10 parents, and their reactions have ranged from "accepting, saying 'OK, let's go,'" to unbelieving.

Myra Jones, an instructional aide working at the school Thursday while the faculty was off in an emergency meeting, counted herself among the slightly skeptical.

"I live on Mount Bache," she said, gesturing to the northeast. During the last quake centered in the area, about a 4 on the Richter scale, her home "got a good jolt" that left the doors at weird angles. Everyone lives with the realization that Summit area is a fault zone, Jones said.

"There is a lot of confusion right now," she said, without a trace of criticism. "A lot of people are wondering if it's a major fault, or just some fingers, like the ones you find everywhere around here."

"I think many people were wondering, 'Why now?' Why couldn't it just wait until spring break," Jones said of the move, which will throw the school into a tumult. On the other hand, she agreed, safety should come first.

"It's hard on the kids. They're feeling unsettled. They don't know what's going to happen," Jones said.

Shank acknowledged that the move will probably be a big headache. But her manner was calm

and matter-of-fact, and she was philosophical about the problem.

"I have really been able to keep this in perspective in light of what is going on elsewhere."

"Think about the shooting in Stockton. That's a real tragedy," Shank said. "And what about the possibility of a building collapsing? I would rather take care of this problem before it happens."