



Mike McCollum

A construction worker examines the machinery that tipped over when loose sand beneath it gave way.

# Loose sand tilts construction machinery

Work came to a teetering halt yesterday morning at a La Selva Beach work site, as the sand gave way beneath an excavator, tipping the heavy piece of equipment onto its side and over the edge.

No one was injured in the 9 a.m. mishap on Hillview Way, where men and machines are regrading the hillside that slopes down about 120 feet onto a row of ocean-front homes.

A boom on the excavator caught in the sandy bluff, an-

choring it just below the top of the slope, while a contingent of hardhats considered the logistics of righting the rig and hauling it back up.

The excavator operator said he was in the process of moving equipment over the side when "it just slipped out from under me. I thought of dropping the load to get rid of the weight," but before he could act, the sand moved again.

"I took off my seat belt and

jumped out," he said, adding that the impact of the incident didn't hit him until 20 minutes after the fact.

He said that in his 20 years in the business, he's never experienced this type of accident. He also asked to remain nameless.

"You don't understand how much crap I'm going to take for this," he said. "Everybody around here knows me. I'm really going to take some heat on this one."

The excavator never did get

put back to work. It was after 5 p.m. before the crew began hooking the rig to towing cables to get it off the slope, said Thomas Beres, field superintendent with Soil Engineering Construction Inc., the firm subcontracted by Granite Construction for the project.

The county regrading project is one of the last to be done in repairing damage from the Loma Prieta earthquake, Beres said.