

EQ-1989-SC County-Rebuilding

Register-Pajaronian Tuesday, November 7, 1989 - 7

Governor signs quake relief package

SAN FRANCISCO (UPI) — Gov. George Deukmejian signed an emergency \$909 million state relief package to help northern California's earthquake victims "rebuild their lives."

Joined by San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos and a dozen legislators, the Republican governor signed into law a package of bills that included a 13-month increase in the state sales tax.

"I think it demonstrates very clearly that California is a family," Deukmejian said in a ceremony on the waterfront following a symbolic ferry trip across San Francisco Bay.

The package will distribute \$909 million to help repair or replace highways, homes, buildings and bridges damaged in the quake. It will also provide aid to victims in nine counties that were declared disaster areas from the devastating Oct. 17 quake.

Quake victims will also receive \$150 million in tax relief.

The Legislature passed the 24-bill package during the weekend in a special session called by the governor, who signed the bills just a day short of three weeks after the quake, which registered 7.1 on the Richter scale, killed at least 65 people, injured 3,258,

displaced more than 13,000 from their homes, and caused billions of dollars in damage.

Deukmejian proposed the quarter-cent sales tax hike and said he believes it will be adequate to take care of earthquake recovery. If not, "then we'll seek other sources of funds to meet the needs," he said.

"I think it shows how effectively we can help people rebuild their lives in times of crisis," Deukmejian said.

He arrived at the Ferry Building after a 45-minute boat ride across San Francisco Bay aboard the Catalina Empress from Jack

London Square in Oakland with regular commuters.

The governor said he took the ferry to show how commuters have adapted to the area's damaged traffic system.

The heavily used San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge is still undergoing repair, and is not likely to be reopened until at least Thanksgiving.

The closure of the bridge and other Bay Area freeways have forced thousands of commuters to take long detours or use ferries or the Bay Area Rapid Transit system subway to get

across the bay separating San Francisco from bedroom communities in the East Bay.

Key to the relief package is an emergency 13-month quarter-cent increase in the state's sales tax that will raise about \$800 million. It will go into effect Dec. 1. The sales tax currently ranges between 6 and 7 cents, depending on local levies.

Officials estimate the state will have to pay \$1.035 billion for earthquake recovery. The federal government has allocated \$3.45 billion for highway repairs and loans to individuals and businesses.