

# Earthquake 1984 - Watsonville Quake price tag keeps rising in Watsonville

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**WATSONVILLE** — The damage toll keeps rising in this agricultural town, with losses to private homes, businesses and public facilities pegged at more than \$128.6 million.

The Pajaro River levee has sustained an additional \$20 million in damage, City Manager John Radin said.

Cracks running 5 to 10 feet deep have split the levee from Pajaro Dunes all the way to Chittendon Pass in Aromas, he said.

"I'm very concerned about that levee," said Mayor Betty Murphy. "Mark my words, we're going to have a bad winter."

As heavy rain pelted south county early in the day, people living in tent cities rushed to semi-permanent shelters. By night, most of the people living in makeshift tent cities had found shelter elsewhere.

Somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 people are homeless in

Watsonville, Murphy said. Some have been forced out of their homes by the quake and many others are too scared to return.

"We are trying to encourage people to go to the shelters," Murphy said.

Many Mexican-Americans remember the massive earthquake and aftershocks of the Mexico City disaster four years ago and are afraid to seek shelter inside a building, city officials said.

But by night, no one was camping at the City Plaza, 200 block of Main Street or Watsonville High's Geiser Field anymore, and very few people were left at Pennsylvania Drive. Campers remained at Callaghan Park.

The Red Cross set up tents with wooden bottoms and heaters at Ramsay Park, and by nightfall it was full. Also full were the Vets Hall and National Guard Armory.

A Red Cross volunteer at the Harvest Building at the Santa Cruz

County Fairgrounds said about 50 people had arrived before nightfall, and he expected the huge hall to fill throughout the night.

"We have a promise of emergency housing from Santa Clara County if people can get over the hill," said Murphy. "A motel is available in Santa Clara County and the St. Martin's parish can house up to 400 people. But people have to get there."

Meeting with merchants earlier in the day, Radin ran down the list of buildings that have been condemned.

Downtown is still off limits to business, except for a few banks that have access off another street, until at least early next week, Radin said.

Demolition will begin soon on some buildings, but not until the city has had a chance to talk with the property owners, he said.

"Please don't assume anything,"

Radin said. "If there's any kind of damage, call us to inspect it. We have a number of buildings that are collapsed that are being held up by neighboring buildings."

Some two-thirds of the 300 block of Main Street, directly across from the City Plaza, has been deemed too badly damaged to be repaired and will be razed.

A corner of Ford's Department store at Main and West Beach Street will have to be demolished. It's the oldest part of the building and sustained the most damage in the quake.

Ford's officials were working to find locations to move their business.

The Oddfellows building on East Beach Street, which houses Bake-Rite Bakery and Kane, Hall, Palmtag Insurance Company, will also be demolished.

Radin said it's still unknown whether the landmark St. Patrick's Church and Lettunich Building, at

Main and East Beach Street, will survive.

A mobile home park on Front Street was evacuated because of damage to the coaches and concern over the river levee, said Murphy. Additionally, 450 mobile homes throughout the city were destroyed by the quake.

"Without a doubt, the hard part for Watsonville is the long-term for housing and the economy," Murphy said. "The public has come through with the emergency supplies, but the long-term is what concerns me."

Murphy said she was disturbed by rumors being circulated by some people that illegal aliens would be deported if they sought shelter at the official shelters.

"People were told not to go to Ramsay Park because it was being run by the military, which isn't true," she said. "You never use an emergency disaster to put fear in people. It's not human."