

Earthquake 1989 - City of Santa Cruz

Six shelters set up for emergency housing



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Devastation was widespread and total along the Pacific Garden Mall following Tuesday's 6.9 earthquake.

By TRACIE WHITE
Santa Cruz Sentinel

SANTA CRUZ — The elderly, the homeless, and people too frightened to sleep in their homes scrambled to find shelter throughout the county in the aftershock of Tuesday night's earthquake. While many school yards and front lawns were turned into camping grounds, the Red Cross set up six shelters across the county that housed about 250 people, according to the county Office of Emergency Services.

Most of the shelters, many providing some food, will remain open as long as necessary, according to Red Cross workers.

Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium housed more than 150 people. Many were the elderly from the Palomar and St. George retirement hotels on Pacific Garden Mall, which were severely damaged in the quake. About 20 people, mostly families, were housed at Messiah Lutheran Church on High Street. Sixteen people slept at the Veteran's Hall in Watsonville; 120 at the Armory in Watsonville; eight at New Brighton Middle School in Capitola; and 48 at St. Michael's Church in Boulder Creek.

Workers at the Civic Auditorium have been slow to get the food and blankets needed to meet the demands of people left stranded by the earthquake, according to Larry Copeland of the Red Cross. "We can't guarantee a cot," said Copeland, who was still hoping for incoming supplies from Fort Ord at 8 this morning. "We had sandwiches and milk last night. The shelter housed one family with seven children whose house had burned down following the earthquake," Copeland said. The lobby of the Civic

this morning was crowded with people, old and young, wandering aimlessly, not sure where to go.

Bill Swain, 71, was wrapped in a wool blanket that he waited for until 2 a.m. "It's too cold for me," said Swain, who had been carried down three flights of stairs from his room at the Palomar following the earthquake. Swain, who has emphysema, spent the night sitting in the auditorium chairs because all the cots were full. He said there was screaming and panicking whenever an aftershock hit, but most of the night was quiet. "I'm living, so that's fine with me," he said, shaking his head.

A candlelit dinner was set up Tuesday night outside of Calvary Lutheran Church in downtown Santa Cruz for 100 or so seniors, who eventually were transferred to the Civic. Messiah Lutheran Church provided several families with warm food Tuesday night, said Cheryl Cords, a Red Cross worker. "Some people were afraid to be alone. Some had gas mains broken in their neighborhood. No one lost any homes. Most were just pretty messed up."

When cots were filled, the shelter used the cushions off the church pews for beds. "What really helped us was Retired Pastor Harold Johnson and his wife Maxine. They were here most of the night. The church used their own food reserves to feed people and the pastor waited in lines at Safeway to get milk for the children this morning," said Cords.

Anyone who needs housing in the San Lorenzo Valley may call 338-6112 for transportation to the St. Michael's shelter. For information on the Red Cross shelters, call 335-3582.

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