

The big windstorm



Diane Varni

Chris Childers cuts up a eucalyptus tree that fell across Soquel Drive in Aptos yesterday.

5,000 homes still without power

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

Gale-force winds left a trail of devastation all over the Monterey Bay area this weekend.

No injuries or fatalities were reported, said Nancy Gordon of the Santa Cruz County Department of Emergency Services.

She said the county's 911 emergency help number logged about 2,000 calls

■ Related story on page 11

between 11 a.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. Sunday, most of them wind-related.

Emergency service workers from all over the county reported trees down and wind-whipped power lines shooting sparks.

Some power lines that didn't go down of their own accord had to be turned off to eliminate a fire hazard, said

Gordon.

Fire departments from all over the county reported being called out to keep watch over lines threatening to collapse and start fires.

As many as 14,000 households lost electricity over the weekend, and PG&E reported this morning that 5,000 residences countywide still had no power.

"The stuff was blowing down more rapidly than we could get it back up," said Bill Leonard, a PG&E spokesman.

Leonard said the utility company had more than 100 crewmen, some from Santa Clara and Monterey counties, working today to restore power in areas from Eureka Canyon to Boulder Creek.

He said "several hundred to a thousand" customers in remote areas might not get their electricity back until tomorrow, however.

The electrical outage affected homes and businesses alike. The entire Deer Park Shopping Center in Aptos was knocked out for 12 hours on Sunday, said Bruce Ryder, a manager at Deluxe Foods in the center.

Ryder said the grocery store "lost a limited amount of ice cream" because of the outage, and curtailed business hours.

Ryder said Deluxe Foods also suffered some spoilage of items in its deli case and "lost a little bit of ground beef." All the spoiled foods were thrown away, he said.

Eleven boats from the Monterey small craft harbor blew loose from their moorings, according to a Coast Guard spokesman, but none were lost from the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor.

Ted Warburton, deputy harbor master, said Santa Cruz harbor staff had "walked the entire dock" retying boats so they wouldn't be torn from their moorings.

About two dozen tarpaulins were blown off boats, however, Warburton said.

He said some boat owners had wanted to go sailing in the gale-force winds.

"We strongly discouraged them," he said. "The wind was directly out of the north, so you would sail out of the harbor like a bullet, but you can't tack back in."

A fallen tree blocked Green Valley Road outside Watsonville at Litchfield Lane from Saturday night until yesterday afternoon, the Salsipuedes Fire Department reported.

Pacific Bell spokeswoman Vivien Lauster said there were 240 reports of telephone service outages in Santa Cruz County this morning, "about five to eight times normal for a Monday morning."

She added that many customers may have not notified the telephone company about their problems.

In many cases, she said restoring telephone services depended on first repairing damage to PG&E's electric lines.

"When a downed power line is being worked on," she said, "Pac Bell cannot work in the area until PG&E gives the all-clear."

Emergency service workers didn't want to hazard guesses on the amount of property damage caused by fallen trees and other wind-related havoc.

Gordon of the county Emergency Services department estimated damages would run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Besides cleaning up after trees that fell down, Gordon said, some property owners may have to pay to remove wind-damaged trees now threatening to fall.