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President surveys damage



Chip Scheuer

President Bush talks with Leon Panetta, with his back to camera, Mardi Wormhoudt, and Gary Patton, right, during his tour of the Pacific Garden Mall in Santa Cruz yesterday.

Big crowds fill downtown Santa Cruz

By JENNIFER SASSEEN
STAFF WRITER

Crowds lined the streets surrounding the Pacific Garden Mall yesterday to try to catch a glimpse of President George Bush, who came to Santa Cruz to get a firsthand look at the earthquake damage, then quickly drove out of town on Ocean Street in a black limousine surrounded by CHP officers and Secret Service agents.

"It makes me realize that this is a bad situation if the president is coming," said Eileen Noonkester, an Aptos resident who said she was on the UC-Santa Cruz campus when the quake struck.

Like most other people interviewed in the vicinity of Center and Cathcart streets

Bush praises volunteer efforts

"God bless those volunteers," President Bush said during his visit to Santa Cruz, talking about the Red Cross and others helping to clean up the disaster area. Five died in the seaside community.

Bush, a strong advocate of volunteerism, said, "There's no ceiling on the compassion of the American people."

yesterday, Noonkester was hopeful Bush's visit would help the city get federal money to rebuild.

As Santa Cruz resident Travis Campbell said, "It'll

Damage from earthquake, which measured 6.9 on the Richter scale, caused damage estimated as high as \$3 billion, and Deukmejian said the state has a \$1 billion reserve for earthquakes.

"We'll use every bit of that," Deukmejian said before turning to Bush and saying, "You're going to be hearing a lot about the need for additional funding."

boost our morale a little bit for the President to come to town and maybe it'll help release federal funds."

"I think there's nothing like being on the scene to tell what

needs to be done," said Campbell's wife, Peggy.

Some people apparently were not so pleased with Bush's visit; Noonkester said she saw a police officer writing a ticket for an unknown reason to a man carrying a sign reading "Impeach Bush." Other people carried signs reading "You are the cause of destruction in this country" and "The Drug War is a Disaster."

Santa Cruz resident John Fallon said he did not go downtown to see Bush, but was in the area on other business, and did not think Bush's visit would have any effect on the area.

"A disaster is a disaster," Fallon said. "He's here and See BUSH page 11 ▶"

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whether he comes or not, that's not going to change things."

Teresa Darling, of Santa Cruz, said she had come downtown to get into a Center Street office building her family owns, which she had been allowed into yesterday. She said, however, that law-enforcement officers had refused to allow her inside the building, which bordered a cordoned-off area, during Bush's visit.

"I'm really not quite sure what good it will do," she said of the President's visit, "but I'm pleased he's making the effort."

Linda Rush, a lifelong resident of Santa Cruz, said she'd been shopping in Ford's Department Store — portions of which collapsed and crushed one woman to death — just a few hours before Tuesday's quake. She said she knows one of the injured salespeople and also the owners of Johnny's Sport Shop, at the south end of the mall, which sustained damage in the quake.

"This is the most devastating thing, I think, to hit Santa Cruz," Rush said. "At least, in my lifetime."

Rudy Torres, a Live Oak resident who is general manager of the recently remodeled El Palomar Restaurant on the ground floor of the Palomar Hotel on the mall, said he thought Bush's visit

was a good sign the merchants and residents hurt by the quake would get help.

The future of the Palomar Hotel is in doubt, he said, because the third floor of the building reportedly sustained a bad crack.

"As far as the restaurant itself," he said, "it's bad, but it's not that bad."

Torres said restaurant owner Jose Esponzias hopes to rebuild, but was searching for a restaurant to lease in the meantime. If he finds one and gets into operation, he plans to give out free food "and do everything we can to help the community," Torres said.

Torres said he was in his office at El Palomar at the time of the quake and plaster started falling down, a new big-screen TV crashed to the floor and glasses flew off the shelves. He said he was grateful all the customers and employees got out safely.

"I just figured, in my mind, I was going to have to dig people out," he said.

Santa Cruz resident Kendall Hill worried about the economic and cultural loss the damage to downtown will mean to the community and said he thought Bush's visit would help bring disaster aid a little quicker.

"These businesses — this is the heart of Santa Cruz," he said. "Without these businesses, this town's going to be in sad shape for years."