

A shock as big as the quake: Santa Cruz a disaster area

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A major aftershock to the April 24 earthquake hit Santa Cruz County this morning when it was announced that the federal government has declared the county "a disaster area" based on federal estimates of quake damage here.

It seems to be a case of a disaster area looking for a disaster.

Some groceries fell off shelves, a window or two broke and walls here and there cracked. But no injuries were reported, nor was there any major damage.

However, Santa Cruz County got lumped into a disaster declaration for Santa Clara County, where some real damage occurred in the 6.2 percent quake that rocked Northern California.

"There's been some controversy in the past that this agency wasn't responsive to

Santa Cruz County, so we wanted to avoid that, among other reasons, in declaring your county a disaster area," said Larry Wodarsky, regional director of the Small Business Administration this morning.

He said that federal disaster evaluation teams had toured Santa Cruz County and investigated businesses where damage occurred. Apparently, there was sufficient

to have the county declared "a disaster area."

An SBA emergency assistance office will be open Friday, Saturday and all next week at 1766 Crest St., Morgan Hill. A declaration of disaster opens the door for low-interest SBA loans.

SBA, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, got into hot water in this county after the Storm of 1982 when storm victims felt federal disaster assistance left much to be desired.

It left a lot of applicants out in the cold and waiting great periods of time before loans and other assistance came through.

The local press took FEMA to task, and that theme was picked up by out of town newspapers and television reports.

The disaster area declaration was made by the Small Business Administration in Washington. It was announced by Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Monterey.