

There are 14 smelters now open in Santa Cruz County.

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City cuts red tape for damage repairs

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

Some of the red tape for repairing earthquake-damaged buildings will be cut, the Watsonville City Council decided yesterday.

In an emergency meeting, the council adopted an emergency ordinance that will allow issuance of building permits without plans for residential buildings, as long as the repairs are in compliance with the building code.

Homeowners will still need to go to the building department at City Hall (728-6017) to obtain permits.

The ordinance also allows the city to issue permits for major repair of commercial and industrial buildings if the owner has a structural engineer provide a damage assessment for the entire structure and makes appropriate recommendations for the repairs.

Repairs still must meet all the building code requirements, city officials said.

Except for projects that are in

the final stages of building-plan approval, there will be a moratorium on permits for anything except earthquake repair and reconstruction.

At a meeting with 125 business people before the council meeting, City Manager John Radin said he's hoping some Main Street businesses can re-open by the end of the week. Radin said he will begin meeting this afternoon with owners of the buildings scheduled for demolition.

"Nothing will be done until we meet with the individual property owners," Radin said.

Condemned buildings could begin coming down as early as tomorrow, he said.

Several owners of businesses that weren't damaged asked if they could re-open, but Radin said they will all stay closed until PG&E can put in new gas lines. Gas to the downtown business area was cut off last week. Some business people will be able to go into their buildings to retrieve their goods, depending on the

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condition of the building.

Mayor Betty Murphy asked if the clock on the Odd Fellows Hall and some of the facades of the old buildings could be saved, but Radin said it would be dangerous to try to save them.

Charlene Shaffer, executive director of the Watsonville Chamber of Commerce, urged business people to apply for loans and aid

from all of the available programs.

The Federal Disaster Assistance Center is at the Crossroads Shopping Center, at Green Valley Road and Main Street. The phone number is 1-800-462-9029. Applications for all the federal programs can be made there, or over the phone.

Larry McFarland, of the Small Business Loan Administration, said there are funds available for damage to buildings and inventory as well as "economic injury loans" to replace working capital.