

Highway

# Tow trucks patrol Highway 17

4-17-94

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## State will fund the service

SANTA CRUZ — Those who travel Highway 17 can rest a little easier now that the Freeway Service Patrol is operating.

The state-funded tow truck service, free to motorists, began Monday on the Santa Cruz County and Santa Clara County sides of Highway 17.

The white tow trucks with red lettering roam the highway from 6-9 a.m. and from 3:30-6:30 p.m. weekdays, according to Kenny Fragiadakis of Matos Auto Center of San Jose, which has contracted to provide the service in

Santa Cruz County.

Trucks operate from Mount Hermon Road in Scotts Valley to Highway 9 in Los Gatos.

When tow truck operators spot motorists in trouble, they stop and try to get the vehicle started. If that isn't possible, the trucks tow the vehicle to a phone where the motorist can call for help.

Since the service began Monday, the patrol has helped about 15 motorists on the Santa Cruz County side of Highway 17 and about 50 on the Santa Clara

County side.

Great America Towing and Transportation has contracted to provide the same service on the Santa Clara County side.

The service will cost \$230,750 for two years. The money will come from the state Department of Transportation and from a \$1 fee paid when vehicles are registered with the state.

The program was approved by the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission in

December. It is being administered by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission of the San Francisco Bay Area, which has operated similar tow services over 100 miles of freeway since 1992.

When the Bay Area commission decided to expand the service to the Santa Clara County side of Highway 17, local commissioners agreed it made sense to include the service on this side of the hill.

The local commission also is considering expanding the service to operate on weekends during the summer season.