

Destruction at the epicenter

Santa Cruz County struggles to cope

By Carrick Leavitt
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SANTA CRUZ — Residents of picturesque Santa Cruz County, at the epicenter of Tuesday's earthquake and the site of several aftershocks, surveyed their damaged homes and businesses before deciding whether to stay or leave.

Evidence of the quake's magnitude was apparent outside the home of Freda and John Tranbarger. A 4-foot-wide, 15-foot-deep, 250-yard-long gash in the earth is drawing curious scientists and gawkers.

Jeff Marshall, a graduate geology student at UC-Santa Cruz, said the gash, two miles from the quake's epicenter, was "the most extensive ground rupture" seen in

the area.

The crack miraculously missed the Tranbargers' home, which suffered little damage, but many residents in nearby communities nestled among the pines and redwoods were less lucky.

Robert Buonosera, 41, of Boulder Creek, was watching the World Series pregame show on TV when he felt the shaking and headed out the door. From outside, he watched half his home on scenic Blue Ridge Drive slip down the hill.

"I couldn't run in a straight line. I fell down three or four times trying to get away," Buonosera said.

Neighbor Rise Ciufia, who moved into her home in July, suffered a similar fate. "I go from crying to telling myself, 'I'll rebuild.' But where do I get the money to do it?"

A dozen miles to the south, Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Calif., met with city officials in Watsonville and re-

ported at least \$1 billion in quake damage in his district — Santa Cruz, Hollister and Watsonville.

More than 2,000 victims spent a third night in the county's seven emergency shelters or camped outside. Most had been jolted awake by aftershocks early Thursday, the worst of which hit at 3:14 a.m. PDT in Santa Cruz. It registered 4.6 on the Richter scale.

Another aftershock, measuring 4.3, struck near Watsonville at 2:54 a.m. A third, at 4:15 a.m., had a magnitude of 3.7. Three others ranged from 3.5 to 3.7.

Tuesday's Bay Area earthquake was centered just 10 miles from the resort city of Santa Cruz, 60 miles south of San Francisco.

The body of Robyn Ortiz, a 23-year-old coffee store employee buried under several feet of rubble, was uncovered Thursday. Two others also died in the store collapse.