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New sites needed for trailers

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Some of the mobile homes to house earthquake victims in a temporary park behind the Watsonville courthouse should be ready for occupancy by Dec. 1.

Luther Perry, head of the county's housing task force, told the county Board of Supervisors yesterday that workers have been working 12-hour shifts seven days a week to get the site ready for the mobile homes. Forty mobile homes are destined for that site, but with 150 mobile homes on order from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the housing task force is also busy searching for other sites.

The St. Francis School site east of Watsonville, the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds and a Melody Lane site, off Green Valley Road, are also under consideration.

Perry said the Salesian Mission Society, which owns the St. Francis site, should decide this week whether to allow mobile homes there. Questions concerning the Melody Lane site should also be resolved in a day or two, he said, pointing out that there may be a problem with drainage there. Complications involving the fairgrounds, however, will not be so quickly resolved.

"It would not be practical to put in a mobile-home park unless we get a commitment to put in the sewer," Perry said.

Board Chairman Gary Patton urged that the county not allow "bureaucratic temporizing" to frustrate plans for locating a mobile-home park at the fairgrounds. Plans to build the sewer line got tangled up two years ago, he said, when the "little bitty" Salsipuedes Sanitation District was told by the state to construct the line and the state would reimburse the district later.

Because the sanitation district could not afford to do that, however, it suggested that the state construct the sewer line and the district maintain it, Patton said, and the sewer line has

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been in limbo ever since. With winter rains imminent and more people likely to be seeking shelter when things start getting wet, he said, it's important the state be urged to move on the sewer line issue.

According to the latest figures, 590 dwellings were destroyed in the Oct. 17 quake, 1,995 received major damage and 668 mobile homes were destroyed or left with major damage.

Perry said he would check with Public Works on the situation at the fairgrounds to see if there is anything the county can do to speed things along.

Patton also suggested that the Red Cross, which has vowed to stay as long as needed but has given no guarantees it will continue its hotel-voucher program for people left homeless by the quake, should be urged to continue that service.

"It is important that the Red Cross understand that this is an important and critical need and I am reluctant to let them off the hook," he said.

Perry said he would try to get addresses to which letters could be sent supporting that idea.