

Earthquake 1989 - Santa Cruz County

Emergency state ended by Scotts Valley council

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Scotts Valley officials have discontinued the state of emergency declared on Oct. 17, saying the city has a firm handle on earthquake-related damage and no longer needs extraordinary powers to deal with the situation.

"Obviously, we're still doing mop-up work and inspecting every building in town," said City Administrator August Caires. "But we feel the emergency part is over now. ... We're pretty much out of danger. We thought it was time to undeclare the emergency."

The council declared the emergency over at its Wednesday night meeting.

The cities of Santa Cruz, Watsonville and Capitola are still operating under a state of emergency, as is the county of Santa Cruz.

Gov. George Deukmejian declared a state of emergency in Santa Cruz County within hours of the Oct. 17 earthquake, and officials from Santa Cruz's four cities and the county government announced their own emergency ordinances a short time later.

The local ordinances identified a director of emergency services for each jurisdiction and waived procedural rules to allow emergency work to begin unimpeded by time-consuming public review. City administrators were named emergency services directors for the cities, while County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello assumed the post for the county.

"Under our plan, I had the power to declare an emergency, which the City Council took action to ratify

later," Caires said. "As (emergency services) director, I had the power to deal directly with the state and federal government to request aid and assistance, as well as the power to declare martial law or confiscate private property. These are extraordinary powers."

Martial law was not declared anywhere in the county, but some private property rights were abridged during the emergency.

Scotts Valley Mayor Glennon Culwell's home was quickly condemned by the City Council to make room to replace an earthquake-damaged bridge, and some Santa Cruz business owners were denied access to their damaged properties by the city.

"Under (emergency) police powers, local government can prevent someone from entering their building," said Laura Brown, assistant city manager of Santa Cruz. "Normally we couldn't do that, but where there's a threat to public safety we take on certain powers and can say, 'No, you can't go in the building,'" she said.

The Santa Cruz City Council

voted Tuesday to extend its state of emergency through Nov. 28. Watsonville and the county government are also planning to extend their declarations of emergency.

"We still have close to 300 people in shelters, we haven't demolished severely damaged buildings, and there are flood control issues to be resolved," said Watsonville Fire Chief Gary Smith. "There's still a great deal of emergency work to deal with."

Capitola suffered very little damage in the quake, but is maintaining its state of emergency until the state's emergency designation is canceled, according to city Planning Director Susan Tupper.

Scotts Valley also escaped with little damage from the quake.

"We were probably the closest incorporated area to the epicenter, but we had the least damage," Caires said. "We're a newer city — most of our buildings were built within 15 years and they're wood frame. The necessity of the emergency drew to a conclusion the quickest for us."