

# Operation Snowflake: Trial By Fire

By PAUL BEATTY  
Sentinel Staff Writer

Operation Snowflake's ultimate trial will be by fire.

Given the name "Operation Snowflake" by Gene Cummings, Felton Forestry Division's operational officer, the term encompasses the critically dangerous fire conditions of the north county forests and also the attack formula to prevent and fight fires that could easily occur.

Operation Snowflake, Cum-

mings said, includes all citizens and visitors in the north county and every fire fighting unit in the San Lorenzo Valley and its extended environs.

"As I've said since the Jan. 3 snowstorm that caused thousands of trees and limbs to fall, conditions this year are ten times worse than normal," stated Cummings Friday.

Civil Defense and the American Red Cross have also looked to readiness in the event of a major fire in the valley and

have reviewed their standing plan for an emergency.

This plan involves the potential evacuation of threatened residents, probably by school bus, the housing and feeding of them at UCSC and full medical care if necessary.

Cummings reminded residents and visitors that the ban on open burning is already in effect.

The regional unit of state forestry headquartered in Felton expects to be given about

\$250,000 by July 1 and will spend the money to keep every one of its engines on - line with crews increased from three men to five men.

Also this year, two TBM borate bombers stationed in Hollister with the capacity of dumping 600 gallons of retardant per load are being replaced with two S - 2 bombers with load capacities of 800 gallons.

Also, the number of bulldozers stationed at critical points in the Santa Cruz Moun-

tains have been beefed up to three and are on - line 24 hours a day.

Further, the division is keeping its helicopter, stationed at Smith Creek in the Mt. Hamilton area, at the ready 24 hours a day.

The "chopper," Cummings explained, is capable of getting to the fire quickly — 10 to 15 minutes — with a three man unit armed with hand tools.

It also can drop a small, but effective, load of retardant with

pin - point accuracy, and the division further uses it for recognizance.

The critical fire condition is resulting in the division speeding up the implementation of its mutual aid program involving local fire fighting departments.

Bob Brown, assistant chief of the Felton Volunteer Department, explained, "The mutual aid pact would mean that Felton along with other volunteer units will be back - up for forestry.

"We could be used at brush and timber fires any place in the north county," Brown said.

He pointed out that Felton fire protection district was the least hurt of the major districts in the Jan. 3 snowstorm and suffered seriously in the Fall Creek area.

In Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek, it is another matter.

Chief Bud Tomlin of Boulder Creek Volunteers this weekend is having a huge banner strung across the main street of

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## Kissinger Closes Gap On Pact

# Santa Cruz Sentinel

119th Year NO. 123

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 26, 1974

15c 56 Pages

## Weather

MONTEREY BAY AREA — Low clouds and fog near coast extending inland late night and mornings. Lows today in upper 40s to mid 50s. Highs today and Monday in 60s to low 70s. Small craft advisory for west to northwest wind 10 to 20 mph afternoon and evenings.

Temperatures for 24 - hour period ending at 8 a.m. Saturday: High 76, Low 40; for period ending at 5 p.m. Saturday: High 81, Low 44.