

## **Storm recovery: Find resources here as Santa Cruz County agencies, community groups scramble to coordinate**

Look Out Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz County community organizations and government agencies are scrambling to both respond to current urgent storm-related conditions as well as provide recovery resources.

Several organizations and officials are providing info sessions on filing claims Thursday and Friday, starting at 4 p.m. each day, while at the same time preparing for coming storms.

“We’re doing these webinars right now, but then come Friday morning, I think we’ll probably be out in the community again, trying to get people prepared with sandbags. And get people prepared with emergency radios and food and water,” Tony Nuñez, communications manager for local nonprofit Community Bridges, said of his agency’s current balancing act. “So it almost feels like we’re doing it all over again trying to get ready for Saturday.”

Community Foundation Santa Cruz County CEO Susan True said recovery efforts have been hampered by the fact that the damage is spread across such a wide swath of the region, from Pajaro to Boulder Creek, and involves power outages, flooding and destruction from ocean swells.

“We have both residential, business and public damage in so many different parts of the county that it’s hard to even know exactly what people need,” she said.

Nuñez added that local agencies and community groups are eventually aiming to have one location or platform for recovery resources for everyone in the county, but it’s a difficult goal.

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e/ Date: July 3, 2024

“We’re so spread out, and the needs of, say Capitola Village are going to be totally different than the needs of the community in Watsonville, or our neighbors over in Pajaro or people up in Felton,” he said. “There have been conversations about having a one-stop shop for where nonprofits can come together and triage.”

He recommended that people who don’t know where to start reach out to their nearest community resource center. These centers are programs run by Community Bridges.

- **Felton/San Lorenzo Valley:** Mountain Community Resources 831-335-6600
- **Capitola/Soquel:** Live Oak Community Resources 831-476-7284
- **Watsonville:** La Manzana Community Resources 831-724-2997
- **Santa Cruz:** Nueva Vista Community Resources 831-423-5747

True added that one challenge local agencies are still trying to figure out is the enormous amount of debris removal.

“Where do we put all of this mud?” she asked. “When you look at some of the streets, some of the mobile home parks in the county, there is just so much mud.” She added that the county is working to figure out how to remove all of the mud and where to take it.

As for businesses damaged by the storms, it’s still unknown when they can reopen and how best to support employees affected by lost wages, particularly in Capitola, True said.

“We’d love for people to get back into Capitola Village — shopping and eating and supporting those businesses, but we don’t know what closures look like and how that will affect both small business owners and employees,” she said. “So there’s just so much, and the rains are still coming. So planning for door-to-door outreach, planning for big volunteer events is difficult when we haven’t had much of a break.”

True said the community learned a lot about disaster recovery after the CZU Complex fire in 2020. Particularly, that while the immediate needs are great — evacuations, displacement and loss of wages — the long-term needs can turn out to be greater. For instance, True said that community groups were

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giving out more money 2½ years after the CZU fires than they were in the immediate aftermath of the blazes because the costs of rebuilding were so high.

“What we know is that, while we need to be in absolute immediate response, giving people relief right now, the big work is ahead,” True said.

Lookout compiled several resources for local residents and businesses hoping to get started on storm recovery.

## Resources and event information

### Community Bridges hosts info sessions on resources, insurance information

Thursday and Friday, local nonprofit Community Bridges is helping host a series of information sessions on flood recovery resources where experts on insurance information and flood claims will also be available to respond to questions.

The meetings will be held virtually and in person; [click here](#) for more information. If you can't attend, the meetings will be recorded and shared online. The dates and locations include:

#### Zoom meetings

South County webinar public link — Thursday, Jan. 12, at 4 p.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81375946466>

669-444-9171 | ID: 813 7594 6466

North County webinar public link — Friday, Jan. 13, at 4 p.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86782037739>

669-900-6833 | ID: 867 8203 7739

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## **In person**

**Thursday, Jan. 12, 4-5 p.m.:** Live Oak Family Resource Center, 1740 17th Ave., Santa Cruz

**Thursday, Jan. 12, 4-5 p.m.:** Pajaro Village Community Room, 739 Bronte Ave., Watsonville

**Friday, Jan. 13, 4:30-5 p.m.:** Mountain Community Resource Center, 6134 Highway 9, Felton

## **Santa Cruz Volunteer Center**

The Santa Cruz Volunteer Center is working with community organizations and local governments to coordinate where volunteers are needed. It also has a sign-up for people to request help for flood clean-up.

- To request flood clean-up help, [click here](#).
- To sign up to volunteer, [click here](#).
- Volunteer center website: [click here](#).
- To contact the volunteer center, call 831-427-5070.

## **Community Foundation of Santa Cruz**

The Community Foundation has launched a disaster fund to support those affected by the winter storms. To donate, [click here](#).

True added that there is a \$75,000 match for donations to the foundation's disaster fund. Funds will go toward small food-service businesses, individuals who have lost wages and housing, and to help renters and homeowners with remediation of their homes.

## **Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience**

To access a list of resources from the Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience, [click here](#), and scroll down to "Disaster Recovery Resources." The county has a Rainstorm Call Center number that can answer storm-related questions. To get in touch, call 831-454-2285.

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## **United Way of Santa Cruz County**

United Way has also compiled a list of resources available [here](#), and anyone can dial 211 with emergency and recovery-related questions. United Way has a team of six to eight call specialists who answer calls made to 211.

## **United Policyholders**

United Policyholders, a nonprofit that provides guidance on navigating insurance claims, has a list of tips specifically related to the 2023 California storms [here](#). United Policyholders recommends taking photos of all the damage before cleaning up, as well as doing what you can to dry parts of your home to prevent mold. They also have a list of sample letters for filing claims [here](#). United Policyholders is the group that is helping provide useful tips during the info sessions.

## **Discounted accommodation for evacuees**

More than two dozen hotels across the county are offering discounted rates for local evacuees who need a place to stay. Visit Santa Cruz County, the area's tourism marketing district, put together a list of local lodgings opening their doors to locals.

### **[List of Hotels and Rates for Evacuees](#)**

#### **Other links:**

### **[Caltrans Road Closure Map](#)**

### **[Code Red Emergency Notification System](#)**

### **[Santa Cruz County Road Closures and Advisories](#)**

### **[County of Santa Cruz Emergency Resources](#)**

### **[Emergency Response Volunteer Information](#)**

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[Flood Response Disaster Fund](#)

[Zonehaven Evacuation](#)

[Storm Preparedness Checklist](#)

[Rain Totals and Stream Gauges](#)

[2-1-1 Santa Cruz County Helpline](#)

[PG&E Outage Map](#)

(List courtesy of the Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture)

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