

Mudslide traps west Morgan Hill residents

Michael Moore, Gilroy Dispatch, 3-28-11

Scores of residents are trapped in a west Morgan Hill neighborhood after a mudslide made the only road accessing their homes impassable.

The massive slide on Croy Road happened sometime late Saturday night or early Sunday morning, according to one of the residents. The Santa Clara County road department heard the first report of the slide about 8 a.m. Sunday.

"The entire mountain is down, with about seven 200-foot redwood trees" felled across the road, according to county road dispatcher Linda Machado. She estimated "hundreds of tons" of debris clogged the road about two miles from the western end of Croy Road where it intersects Uvas Road west of Morgan Hill.

Trapped is the Sveadal Swedish-American community, which consists of homes and rental cabins, and Uvas Canyon County Park - located at the end of Croy Road - is inaccessible to visitors.

The slide happened at the tail-end of a series of storms that have drenched Morgan Hill with more than six inches of rain the last two weeks. The National Weather Service reported that it has rained 15 days so far this month in Morgan Hill.

Croy Road accesses steep, rugged terrain in the hills west of Morgan Hill, but it ends at the county park.

County road crews spent all day Sunday and Monday attempting to clear the mud, trees and debris. A resident said crews at the site anticipate the road will be clear by about 6 p.m. Tuesday.

Croy Road resident Hugh McPhee said Monday morning that the crews had not yet started cutting the trees out of the way. In the afternoon his wife Susan McPhee said some of the trees had been removed, but the road was still impassable.

He estimated the slide covered "about 40 to 50 yards" of the road and up to 150 residents of the cut-off neighborhood were trapped in or out.

Neither of the McPhees - who live just past the slide - could get to work Monday morning. They both work for Summer Winds Garden store. Cleanup might get complicated due to the sludge-like consistency of the earth that collapsed onto the road.

"The mud is like lava. It's wet and oozing, and it's still moving," McPhee said.

The trees that fell took several power lines with them, and PG&E was first on the scene to move the lines, McPhee said.

No one was injured, and no significant private property damage resulted from the mudslide.