

CITYSCAPE FOCUS



WILLIAM VISTA / RANCHO CUCCAMONGA VOICE

Palmer Canyon resident, Friedl Baumann, left, talks with Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger in German, about the fire devastation in Palmer Canyon during the opening of a one-stop center.

One-stop center opens

More than 130 families displaced by brush fires have come for financial and other support, relief officials say.

Joshua Peizer
Rancho Cucamonga Voice

Ron Termeoroosh saw the flames consume his house as he and his family ran to safety. Still, more than a week later he can hardly believe it's gone.

"Everyday is one day at a time, and I'm slowly realizing it really did happen because it's still a shock to me and the whole family," he said. "Pretty much our whole life that we started was there and everything that we owned and had was just about there . . . It's hard to really sit and talk about and think about."

Joseph Fogler, 82, and fiancée Jana Miller, 52, were left with little but the clothes they wore and their dog, Muzzy, after losing their San Antonio Heights home.

"We have to have housing, [because] it's kind of difficult to sleep in a dormitory on a cot with about 30 other people sleeping there," Fogler said recalling their stay at a Red Cross shelter. "I would say conservatively in five days we might have had 15 hours total sleep."

Those stories and others like them brought fire victims to the One Stop Disaster Assistance Center in Claremont this week.

The center is one of six throughout the area where victims can go to obtain low-interest federal loans, meals, counseling, food and clothing, rental assistance and health care.

More than 130 families have visited the center since it opened more than a week ago, said Dick Guthrie, Claremont director of human services.

"There is certainly a range of emotion," Guthrie said. "There are folks who have very quickly sprung into action, taken stock of their loss and are working with the appropriate insurance agencies, and there are others where the shock is still there and you can tell that they still have a heavy load on their shoulders."

Guthrie said the center would stay open as long as necessary, but workers will be deployed to other centers when needed.

"The tone is certainly one of being really conscious that people have gone through both a

tremendous emotional and physical loss, and we've tried to be positive and thoughtful in terms of making sure people feel supported and cared about," he said.

The Red Cross workers are also at the center to fill in the gaps with services until more substantial help can be obtained.

"Our main function is to get them through the first 10 days to two weeks after the event until they can kind of get back on an even keel or give some of these programs that take longer to go into effect a little more time," said Mike Conley, executive director for the Claremont Chapter of the Red Cross.

Gov. Davis and Gov.-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger toured the center at its opening, visited with victims and aid workers and promised financial support.

"They have no homes; their dreams went up in smoke. The least we can do is put a check in their hands to help put them back on their feet," Davis said of the victims.

The governor estimated that fire damage cost the state \$2 billion in property and infrastructure damage, firefighting, and reimbursements to states that contributed resources and other

FIRE RELIEF

■ **WHAT:** One Stop Disaster Assistance Center.

■ **WHERE:** Alexander Hughes Community Center, 1700 Danbury Road.

■ **WHEN:** 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

■ **INFO:** 399-5490.

expenses. He added that more than 5,400 people have applied for state disaster relief.

Congress appropriated \$500 million to aid fire victims as part of the bill approving President Bush's \$87-billion relief package for Afghanistan and Iraq, but Schwarzenegger pledged to continue the push for federal funds including support for removing dead trees, a major cause of brush fires.

"The generosity that I've seen here has been poured out and it really makes me proud to be a Californian," he said. "It is absolutely extraordinary how people came together. The average person out there that maybe has very little themselves shares and gives and that's what we have seen in the last few days."