

State faces big bills, repairs in wake of flooding

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SACRAMENTO — After the deluge of floods comes the deluge of flood-damage estimates, with governments braced for at least \$700 million in preliminary estimates.

Federal and state officials said Wednesday that California's recent storms caused nine deaths, disaster declarations in 46 counties and about \$1.6 billion in damages to public and private property.

"Our levees have frankly been allowed to atrophy over many, many years," U.S. Rep. Vic Fazio, D-West Sacramento, told the state Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee.

The state government could be responsible for \$151 million in repairs while the cost to the federal government and local governments is likely to total \$542 million and \$21 million respectively.

State Sen. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, said land-use policies should be reconsidered so governments

don't repeatedly have to pay to fix flooded subdivisions.

"We cannot allow people to think that they can continue to build subdivisions and other major projects in the flood plains, and we are always going to be the deep pocket for those kinds of disasters," said Costa.

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said agriculture-related losses, public and private, could total \$245 million.

Hard-hit farm communities throughout Northern California will need help repairing century-old levees, and loans to restore buildings and equipment.

"We've seen the largest amount of damage in livestock and orchards," said Veneman, who added that the damage to dormant crops isn't known yet.

Sen. Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena, said the state's share of the flood-related costs is expected to rise once officials tally the final numbers.

John Swanson, coordinating officer for the Federal Emergency Management Administration, said his agency has received about 12,000 applications for emergency aid.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers already has spent at least

\$41 million for emergency flood fights and levee repairs.

Col. David Peixotto said it will take several hundred million dollars to repair levees and other flood-control facilities before next winter's rains.

Peixotto said it is time to look at long-term flood protections in the Delta and Central Valley.

"It has been since the 1960s since we've looked at the San Joaquin Valley in total," said Peixotto.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. officials said damage to the utility system may be in the range of \$52 million to \$82 million, mostly at dams, reservoirs and canals.