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Landslide Causes Rift Between City, Residents

Geologist: Two Homes Considered Total Loss

LA JOLLA, Calif. -- The earth hasn't stopped moving yet in La Jolla, engineers say. On Friday, engineers at the site said there were signs of slight movement and settling along Soledad Mountain Road.

On Wednesday, the earth slid forcing 111 homes to be evacuated. Two of those homes are considered a total loss, according to senior city geological engineer Rob Hawk. This as a lot of fingers are being pointed in different directions, both in the neighborhood and at City Hall. And all the while, the earth underneath this fragile neighborhood is still cracking and settling.

"It's quasi-stable. It was very dynamic on Wednesday. It's slowed down and come basically to a stop," Hawk said.

As the soil keeps adjusting, engineers are drilling down into the earth and lowering experts into the holes to chart and collect soil samples. Each sample gives them a better idea of how to approach temporary fixes and ultimately, permanent repairs. That process could take months and the scientists say some of the houses involved may never be rebuilt.

Meanwhile, the already sour relationship between Mayor Jerry Sanders and City Attorney Mike Aguirre has become even more bitter, and lawyers who specialize in property damage lawsuits are now in the picture. The first damage claim was filed Friday afternoon against the city on behalf of the Ross Clark family. In a letter sent both to Sanders and Aguirre, the McClellan Law firm said the family's home was destroyed and they blame it on the "failure of the city's water service system."

The claim also requests the city preserve and catalogue all of the pipes, valves and hydrants associated with the neighborhood "as evidence" in the case. City officials have 45 days to settle the claim or face a lawsuit. As displaced homeowners are caught in the middle, more residents who live on Soledad Mountain Road had bittersweet homecomings Friday morning. They dragged their luggage down the street and surveyed the damage to their homes.

Susan Kazanhi said, "They're going to have to figure out between lawyers and between geologists. That's the only way to get through these days. Unfortunately, nobody wants to take the blame."

