SCHOOL REPAIRS

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school districts.

Don Anderson, executive officer of the board, said he doubted exemptions would be very easy to obtain.

"I believe very honestly that the Allocation Board is going to be real strict about making findings of this type," he said.

"Frankly, it will assist the program at the present time. It's going to be a signal to school districts that may tend to lag."

By that, Anderson said, he meant the Greene bill would be a warning to school districts that there could be no hope of a deadline extension if earthquake-construction contracts have not been let by 1975.

No one knows how many earthquake - hazardous school buildings might be kept open beyond the 1975 deadline if the Greene bill passes.

Anderson said, however, that by 1975, "the great majority" of school children in such buildings will have been moved to other quarters.

His office is now working on a report for Greene's committee, estimating where the state stands in the number of school buildings yet to be brought up to earthquake-safe standards and the cost involved.

A year ago, the estimate was 1,777 school buildings still to be repaired or replaced at a cost of about $600 million. One projection then was that about $210 million worth of construction would remain to be done when the 1975 deadline arrived.

Anderson said those estimates were based on the assumption that all school buildings not up to earthquake-safe standards would be rehabilitated or replaced.

But declining school enrollment statewide now may change that picture, Anderson added.

The earthquake-safe schools issue dates back to 1933, the year of the destructive Long Beach earthquake. In the wake of that quake, the Legislature passed the Field Act, which set earthquake-safe construction standards for school buildings.

Almost no school building erected before 1933 met the standards. But school districts were generally slow to react until the mid 1960s when an attorney general's opinion said school board members could be held personally liable for damages if an earthquake-hazardous school building collapsed.

Later, the Legislature required a survey of all school buildings to find out which were not earthquake-safe. The 1975 deadline to repair, replace or abandon such buildings was also set.

Some school districts tried and failed to win voter approval of bond issues to pay for earthquake-safety construction.

The financial problems were lessened, however, in 1971 when districts were empowered to levy a special tax for that purpose and in 1972 when voters approved a statewide bond issue providing funds for school earthquake-safety construction.

Some argued that the earthquake - hazardous buildings should be abandoned immediately because of the risk to school children.

A Los Angeles County earthquake commission told county supervisors in 1971 that schools should be brought up to standards immediately or vacated—even if classes had to be held in tents.