



Agenda Item No. _____

File Code No. 150.04

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 17, 2011

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Administration Division, Fire Department

SUBJECT: Response To The 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report – Improving Our Emergency Alert System In The 21st Century

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council review and approve a draft letter in response to the findings and recommendations of the 2010-2011 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury report titled, Improving our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century.

DISCUSSION:

On March 10, 2011 the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury delivered a copy of the report to the city titled, Improving our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century. The report was in response to emergency communications with the public during the series of wildfires which impacted our area communities in 2008 and 2009.

The report included a number of findings and recommendations which require written responses from the City, the County and numerous other public agencies.

California Penal Code Section 933(c) requires that the governing body of each public agency which is the subject of a report from the county civil grand jury, respond on the findings and recommendations contained in the report which are relevant to that particular public agency. Staff has drafted a proposed response letter from the City for Council approval.

ATTACHMENT: Draft Response Letter from City of Santa Barbara

PREPARED BY: Andrew DiMizio, Fire Chief

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office

May , 2011

The Honorable Arthur A. Garcia
Assistant Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
312 East Cook Street
P.O. Box 5369
Santa Maria, CA 93456-5369

Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Foreperson Kathryn D. McKee
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Grand Jury Report entitled "Improving Our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century

Dear Judge Garcia,

This letter is in response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury's letter dated March 10, 2011 requesting a response to its 2010-2011 report titled *Improving our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century*. Attached please find the City of Santa Barbara's response pursuant to the requirements of the California Penal Code Section 933.05.

The City of Santa Barbara has been tasked with responding to Findings #2, #3 and Recommendation #2 of the Grand Jury Report entitled "Improving Our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century". The attached response was approved by the Santa Barbara City Council on Tuesday, May 17, 2011.

Very Truly Yours,

James L. Armstrong,
City Administrator

Attachment

Cc: Mayor and City Council members
Steve Wiley, City Attorney
Marcelo Lopez, Assistant City Administrator
Cam Sanchez, Police Chief
Cyndi Rodriguez, City Clerk Services Manager

Improving our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century – Responses April 18, 2011

Finding 2

During past crises, emergency agencies have not always communicated with each other which may have slowed information being passed to affected residents.

Response: The City has excellent relationships with all regional emergency response agencies and communication has improved throughout each recent emergency. Under the City of Santa Barbara's (City) Activation Plan, the City is required to report immediately to the County Office of Emergency Services (County) during an activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). It is also the responsibility of the Emergency Manager to update the County with all information regarding the incident. During the Tea and Jesusita Fires, which impacted the City, the County was notified in a timely manner and was giving periodic updates on current and impending situations. Also, during the last two tsunami threats within the City, although the EOC was not activated, the City was in contact with the County giving updates as applicable.

Recent large scale wildfires, including the Zaca, Gap, Tea and Jesusita events, have exercised the response system. With each succeeding event, the quantity and quality of interagency communication has improved. The City of Santa Barbara participated in unified command management of both the Tea and the Jesusita Fires, along with Montecito Fire Protection District (Tea Fire), Cal Fire, Santa Barbara County, and the United States Forest Service. Ongoing communication occurred face to face, in real time, from the very inception of these incidents. The unified command structure used to manage these incidents included law enforcement, fire agencies and all support personnel. Many, if not all, of the responders knew each other by first name, as a result of working together regularly and at some of the large scale evacuation exercises that were held in the City and Montecito during this same time period. Unified commanders shared emergency information with their respective EOC's and policy administrators creating feedback loops both to and from the incident to the respective involved jurisdictions.

An important and required part of emergency management is an after action review of any large scale incident in which the EOC is activated and State and/or federal funds are used. Subsequent to the Tea Fire, City OES reviewed the Public Information component, and saw the need for additional staffing to provide faster acquisition and dissemination of information from the field. A media working group addressed this issue in February, 2009. As a result of that effort, a group of City Firefighters were trained in emergency communications and a new deployment model for field public information was developed. These individuals could operate in the hazardous fire area, and provide accurate and timely information for EOC staff as well as the public. This model was first used on the Jesusita Fire in May of 2009. Also, a Joint Information Center (JIC) was implemented much sooner for the Jesusita Fire than the Tea Fire to good result. City Fire PIO's were

integrated into the incident command team, the City EOC and the Joint Information Center and provided unprecedented information transfer in all areas.

The Santa Barbara City Fire Department has since added social networking to the repertoire of notification methods. Our Facebook page is subscribed to by many residents and most major media outlets. Ongoing items of interest in an emergency may be posted quickly and immediately picked up by residents and media alike.

It is important to balance the public's ever increasing, seemingly insatiable need for speed and quantity of information with the mandate that public safety responders always provide accurate and unbiased notification. Information that is *inaccurate* is more damaging than slow or little information, when lives and people's property are at stake. We recognize, that in the absence of information, the public will now create information; as so many of us now carry cell phones that can document and access information via the internet at a lightning pace. The public's critical perception of slow information transfer from public agencies is also partially caused by the speed at which we can now access and transmit information via mobile technology such as smart phones and social media.

Every incident occurs at a different pace, and the safety of responders and the public is paramount to all other areas. It is impossible to apply one set of standards for every emergency. Options, such as Reverse 911®, Low power radio, Television, sirens, etc, are now available for communication between responders and the public. Incident commanders utilized many of these methods to communicate the successful evacuation of an estimated 30,000 area citizens in the Jesusita Fire. Each method of communication has limitations and advantages for when and how they are used. Budgetary restrictions limit the implementation of some communication methods, such as dedicated siren alerting or radio systems. Although events may sometimes develop faster than the ability of emergency communications to stay ahead of them, residents and other public agencies are notified at the soonest possible moment with accurate information in a variety of ways, as soon as critical information is learned.

Recommendation 2

The Board of Supervisors and appropriate city jurisdictions require their respective emergency agencies to pass emergency information to adjacent jurisdictions and the Office of Emergency Services without delay.

Response:

This recommendation for a requirement is already in place and is being exercised. The City has a plan in place for communicating with the County during any type of actual or impending incident/emergency. This communication plan is in concurrence with the State's Standardized Emergency Management System requirement, California Government Code section 8706. The City EOC stands ready to support the WebEOC communication component that was purchased with County Homeland Security funding. This internet based tool will link all

jurisdictional EOC's within the OES Operational Area when it comes on line with the completion of the new County OES facility, which is currently under construction.

City of Santa Barbara Emergency Plan:

<http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/NR/rdonlyres/BEA32DB8-89D2-4B4A-BB09-4C34CA429569/0/EOPsmaller.pdf>

Finding 3

No single public emergency services agency has accepted the responsibility for educating the public about the actions the public must take to access emergency service communications or what information the public can expect from various emergency alert/information systems.

Response:

Santa Barbara County OES is tasked with the goal to provide ongoing efforts towards collaboration and cooperation of all the operational area emergency agencies in providing unified public education efforts throughout Santa Barbara County. In late 2008, an Orfalea Fund initiative created *Aware and Prepare*, which created community partnerships to strengthen emergency and disaster readiness. Many positive benefits for the Santa Barbara County public have come out of this grant supported initiative. It was decided in July 2010, that the management of *Aware and Prepare* be transitioned to the Santa Barbara County OES to provide a long term sustainable model. This transition has not been finalized.

The City of Santa Barbara has and will support all efforts to work together regionally to benefit the public in the area of emergency communications. To this end, the City Fire Department OES provides and actively supports Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, not only within jurisdiction but throughout the County. City OES was instrumental in creating a CERT Committee that reviews emergency training curriculum. The Committee has also conducted train the trainer courses to develop CERT trainers throughout the County. City OES uses a variety of methods to convey emergency readiness information to the public, including public meetings, television, and the radio. A monthly informative newsletter is available to the public at the OES website, and through e- subscriptions. City OES assisted in the development and delivery of regional post-fire flood preparedness information during the winter of 2010. Through the coordinated efforts of City and County OES, the City received a Storm Ready designation by the National Weather Service in August of 2009 and is on track to be a Tsunami Ready community by the end of this year.

The City of Santa Barbara Office of Emergency services suffered the loss of a dedicated public education coordinator in 2009 due to budget constraints. Despite this, and only having one management position to coordinate all OES efforts, the City continues to provide emergency preparedness information

through a variety of methods to the public. The City's Fire Department Office of Emergency Services is committed to relaying emergency preparedness information to its citizens by working with the County and other jurisdictions, which includes non-governmental agencies, such as the Red Cross, the previously mentioned Aware and Prepare, Listos, Independent Living Resource Center and VOAD. Exploration for new options and methods to reach the public with emergency information is an integral and ongoing effort.

The City of Santa Barbara OES Website and access to the monthly public emergency preparedness newsletter is located on the internet at:

<http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/Resident/OES/>