

July 10, 2006

The Honorable Judge Rodney Melville
Superior Court
312-M East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454-5164

RE: Response to 2005-06 Grand Jury Report

Your Honor,

We have been asked to respond to three recommendations contained in the Grand Jury's report on "Emergency Public Information". This Fire District appreciates the work of this grand jury and we are pleased to respond.

Recommendation 3

Recommendation 3 of the report stated that "each city and special fire district dispatch center should establish its own independent Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System." The reason given is to reduce the possibility of over loading the county dispatch center that we would currently use. We have discussed this issue with the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department.

At this time, we feel that there is more to be gained from continuing to utilize the County Dispatch Center's Reverse 911 System rather than obtaining and maintaining a separate system for Montecito Fire Protection District. Our impact on the County's system is minimal and by using the same system and procedures we will reduce the possibility of duplicate or conflicting information being given out during an emergency.

Since the system is new and additional improvements are planned, we feel that it is wisest, safest and most efficient to give the existing system a chance to succeed.

Recommendation 4

"All areas within Santa Barbara County that have the unique topography and vulnerability to wildfires or flooding should install a Low Power Radio Emergency Alert System to warn their residents." The Grand Jury recommends that the Montecito Fire Protection District pursue this.

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We agree with this recommendation and have begun planning its implementation. The system that was developed for the Painted Cave area has been very successful and well received by that community.

Montecito Fire Protection District is proposing to fund the equipment and the MERRAG Board of Directors have agreed to operate the system in concert with the Fire District. MERRAG is a group of community volunteers and agencies organized to assist and support the fire district and the community during an emergency.

We have set a goal for June of 2007 to give us time to attempt to coordinate our efforts with other jurisdictions on the South Coast. However, Montecito Fire Protection District will move forward on its own if necessary to implement a system by next fire season.

Recommendation 8

“All participating agencies should continue to support the efforts of the Emergency Public Information Communications Group (EPIC), which is dedicated to improving the emergency public information system throughout Santa Barbara County.”

We agree completely and will continue to support this group of dedicated professionals. We join in encouraging other agencies to also support EPIC.

Please contact me if you have questions or wish clarification on our responses. Thank you for the opportunity to consider these issues.

In the interest of safety,

Ron McClain
Fire Chief

cc: Board of Directors, MFPD
Foreman, Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury
MERRAG