



# County of Santa Barbara

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July 7, 2006

The Honorable Judge Rodney Melville  
Superior Court  
312-M East Cook Street  
Santa Maria, CA 93455-5165

Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury  
Attention: Foreman  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**Subject:**     Response to Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Reports  
(1) Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center  
(2) Emergency Public Information

Honorable Judge Rodney Melville,

On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Services (OES), this letter serves as our response to the following two areas of the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury's Report on Disaster Preparedness:

- Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center
- Emergency Public Information

Please contact me at the letterhead address should you have any questions or require additional information.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce Carter, Manager

## **Emergency Operations Center Grand Jury Report Responses**

***Finding 2:*** *In the event of a power failure at the EOC after business hours, emergency back-up power must be manually hooked up to the facility by employees living outside the south coast area.*

**OES Response:** OES partially disagrees with this finding. While the emergency back-up power must be manually hooked up, there are County employees living within the South Coast area that are capable of hooking up the back-up power.

***Recommendation 2:*** *Install a dedicated electrical hook-up between the EOC and the emergency generator whereby the generator will automatically start and provide power to the EOC in the event of a local power failure.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented within 6 months. The County has secured grant funding to install an automated switch for the emergency generator. Installation of the automated switch will be completed within 6 months.

***Finding 3:*** *Telephone switching and computer networking equipment necessary to activate the communications systems in the EOC is located in a hall closet of the facility and is not anchored to the structure, making it subject to damage in the event of an earthquake.*

**OES Response:** OES disagrees with this finding. County-owned computer and communications equipment located in the EOC are rack-mounted, with the rack attached at the floor, and braced to the walls. Since the EOC is housed within the Employees University, there is some equipment that is the property of the Santa Barbara City College and affiliated with the Employees University rather than the EOC. It is this equipment that was not secured at the time of the Grand Jury's visit.

***Recommendation 3:*** *Secure the EOC telephone system and computer networking switching equipment with earthquake mounting bracketing. Printed instructions on the equipment should be visible to inform persons activating the EOC how to hook up the emergency communications lines.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. County-owned computer and communications equipment located in the EOC are rack-mounted, with the rack attached at the floor, and braced to the walls. Since the EOC is housed within the Employees University, there is some equipment that is the property of the Santa Barbara City College and affiliated with the Employees University rather than the EOC. It is this equipment that was not secured at the time of the Grand Jury's visit. However, the lease agreement between the City College and the County's Employee University facility ends June 30, 2006 and will not be renewed. Therefore, the non-secured equipment will be removed from this facility with the remaining equipment already having been anchored. There are printed instructions on the equipment.

***Finding 4:*** *At the time of the Grand Jury's visit to the EOC, it appeared that the facility lacked updated emergency maps, plans, procedure manuals, logistical resource information, and support supplies. Emergency responders, participants, and decision-makers staffing the EOC are expected to go first to their daily work site (office) and pick up information they need before going to the EOC.*

**OES Response:** OES partially agrees with this finding. Currently there are EOC section boxes (*file box for each EOC section*), located at the EOC that contain manuals and other information for relevant EOC staff and the main EOC computer contains GIS mapping software.

***Recommendation 4:*** *Provide updated manuals, maps, and decision-making information at the EOC at all times for agencies with assigned functions at the EOC.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation is being implemented. The EOC Section boxes (*file box for each EOC section*) with updated manuals, maps and decision-making information at the EOC are being upgraded so that staff does not need to first go to their daily work site or office. The OES will continue to ensure that updated materials are located at the EOC for relevant persons.

***Finding 5:*** *Employees of Santa Barbara County who are not employed in one of the public safety departments may receive as little as one hour of emergency training regarding their roles in a major disaster.*

**OES Response:** OES agrees with this finding. However, many employees outside of the public safety departments do receive more than one hour of emergency training (see response to Recommendation 5)

***Recommendation 5:*** *Expand employee emergency training programs to not just focus on new employees but to train all employees on an annual basis so they will remain informed of current County emergency procedures and what is expected of them in a disaster.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation has been implemented in part, and will continue to be implemented throughout the year by OES, the County's Human Resources Department and other County Departments. In terms of training all employees about the County's emergency procedures and expectations during a disaster, the County's Employee Handbook states that "In emergencies, the public relies on County services for information and assistance. All County employees, by the nature of their employment, are emergency workers. Employees may be called upon to perform duties other than their regular assignments to aid County emergency efforts."

Many departments augment this policy by showing a twelve-minute video on County employees' responsibilities during disasters at departmental staff meetings.

In addition, County departments routinely conduct fire and earthquake drills, including evacuation procedures, so that employees are aware of emergency procedures. OES conducts specialized technical training on emergency management such as the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) training for personnel assigned to the Emergency Operations Center. County employees attending the new orientation course at the Employees University are all provided with SEMS training. In addition, the CEO's office annually sponsors 10 employees with EOC responsibilities to attend a 40-hour course in emergency management at the California Specialized Training Institute in San Luis Obispo.

### **Emergency Public Information Grand Jury Report Responses**

***Finding 1:*** *The present system of getting information to the public will likely fail in a major disaster. Recent consolidations of radio and television stations in Santa Barbara have led to prerecorded formatting. This format makes the availability of live emergency information difficult if not impossible.*

**OES Response:** OES agrees with this finding.

***Recommendation 1:*** *The Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Services should work with news media representatives in Santa Barbara County to develop an emergency public information system that will keep the public informed during a disaster.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. OES has been involved with the Emergency Public Information Communicators (EPIC) group since its inception and is also working in partnership with the local broadcasters to further enhance the emergency public information system. The County has also funded a full-time Public Information Officer (PIO) in the Adopted 2006-07 budget and is actively recruiting to fill this position. The County PIO will be a full-time position tasked with working with the media in order to enhance the County's ability to disseminate emergency public information in a disaster. In addition, a memorandum of understanding with the broadcasters in the area should be in place by the end of 2006.

***Finding 2:*** *The Office of Emergency Services presently relies on voluntary participation of radio and television providers to participate in the Emergency Alert System.*

**OES Response:** OES agrees with this finding.

***Recommendation 2:*** *The County of Santa Barbara should enter into a permanent agreement with local media stations guaranteeing their participation in the Emergency Alert System.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation will not be fully implemented because the County does not have any jurisdiction over the radio stations. The Federal Communications Commission regulates both radio and television broadcasting and the County of Santa Barbara has no direct regulatory authority over radio or television station broadcasting content, only over the County's Government Access Television (CSBTv). The Santa Barbara Local Emergency Alert System (EAS) Plan portion of the California State Emergency Alert System Plan is governed by part 11 of the Rules and Regulations of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Under this Plan broadcast and Cable Television stations in Santa Barbara County will voluntarily rebroadcast, using EAS equipment specified by the FCC, selected messages originated by the National Weather Service (NWS) and the Santa Barbara County, who are accountable for their content. In addition, there is currently no single radio station that with coverage for the entire geographical boundaries of the County. However, Santa Barbara County is currently working in partnership with the broadcasters in Santa Barbara County. A memorandum of understanding with the broadcasters in the area should be in place by the end of 2006.

***Finding 5:*** *Santa Barbara County and emergency agencies within its borders do not have an emergency website or telephone number where citizens can access real-time emergency information.*

**OES Response:** OES partially disagrees with this finding. While there is no exclusive website or telephone number dedicated to all types of emergency information, the County's website is updated regularly and provides real-time emergency information when an emergency, such as severe storms, does occur within the County.

**Recommendation 5:** *Santa Barbara County should immediately develop an emergency Internet website or hotline telephone number that will allow its residents to get real-time accurate emergency information. This website or hotline telephone number should be updated with the same information that is given to the media.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation has not yet implemented, but will be implemented by the end of 2006. While the County already places emergency information on its website for residents to get real-time information during defined emergencies, it will also work with the "2-1-1" system, which is a 24/7 system that provides callers with information about and referrals to human services for every day needs and in times of crisis. A memorandum of understanding between the County and the "2-1-1" system is being crafted that will allow the County to utilize this system to provide real-time accurate emergency management system.

**Finding 6:** *The Office of Emergency Services has not designated an emergency radio station to which residents may tune to receive accurate updated emergency information on a 24-hour basis.*

**OES Response:** OES disagrees with this finding. OES has not designated an emergency radio station because there is no single radio station that will provide coverage for the entire geographical boundaries of the County. Rather, there are four radio stations, including one that broadcasts in Spanish, which serve the area and are included in the County's Emergency Alert System Plan.

**Recommendation 6:** *The Office of Emergency Services should enter into an agreement with a 24-hour media radio station that will be designated as the official emergency station for Santa Barbara County.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation will be implemented in part by the end of the year, but will not be implemented as proposed by the Civil Grand Jury. There is no single radio station that will provide coverage for the entire geographical boundaries of the County; therefore, it cannot enter into an agreement with one 24-hour media station. The County is working on developing a memorandum of understanding with the several broadcast stations in the area, which will be in place by the end of 2006.

**Finding 7:** *Parent education programs in schools throughout Santa Barbara County have had varying degrees of success in informing parents what will happen to their children during and after an emergency.*

**OES Response:** OES agrees with this finding.

**Recommendation 7:** *School districts throughout Santa Barbara County should review their school site disaster plans with their local emergency agencies to ensure that the plans are updated and appropriate. Schools should expand their efforts to keep students and parents*

*informed of all aspects of emergency preparedness and survival through written information provided in both English and Spanish when appropriate.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented by the County because it is outside of the County's jurisdiction. However, OES will continue to support disaster planning efforts in the local schools.

***Finding 8:*** *In late 2005, representatives of agencies in Santa Barbara County that are responsible for providing the public with emergency information formed a public information group (EPIC), with the goal to address problems relating to the collection, verification and dissemination of accurate emergency information.*

**OES Response:** OES agrees with this finding.

***Recommendation 8:*** *All participating agencies should continue to support the efforts of the Emergency Public Information Communicators Group (EPIC), which is dedicated to improving the emergency public information system throughout Santa Barbara County.*

**OES Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. OES has been involved with EPIC since its inception and will continue to participate within this group.