

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

What's happening? Where do I go? What should I do?

Emergency public information systems are intended to warn our residents of a major emergency and actions they need to take to protect their lives and property. Specific areas of review by the Grand Jury resulting in recommendations were: existing emergency alert system utilizing television and radio stations Reverse 911 notification system local low-power radio information systems coordination of public information officers emergency public education for residents, businesses, and schools. Emergencies occurring in or near Santa Barbara County in 2005 brought to the public's attention major weaknesses

The Grand Jury recommends that our County's elected and appointed officials act immediately to improve the methods and the means by which the residents of Santa Barbara County receive vital emergency information required to save lives and property.

There were 9 agency's requested to respond to the "Emergency Public Information" report:

- County Executive Officer [SBCEO]
- Office of Emergency Services/S.B. County Fire [OES]
- The Board of Supervisors [BOS]
- Sheriff's Department [SD]
- Santa Barbara City Council [SBCIC]
- Lompoc City Council [LCC]
- Carpinteria City Council [CCC]
- Santa Maria City Council [SMCC]
- Montecito Fire District [MFD]

Office of Emergency Services Response [OES]

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. 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 ...

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

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.

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;

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.

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.

Carpinteria City Council [CCC]

Recommendation 3, page 8: "Within Santa Barbara County, each city and special fire district dispatch center should establish its own independent Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System. This will reduce the possibility of overloading the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department and Lompoc Police Department Dispatch Center in the event of a County-wide Major disaster."

CCC Response: The Recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. Reverse 911 should be based at the Dispatch Center at the Sheriff's Office, and it should have capacity to cover all. The City of Carpinteria and Carpinteria-Summerland Fire District contract for dispatch services through the Sheriff's Department. Therefore, it is most efficient and effective for Reverse 911 to be based out of the Dispatch Center. It is the City's expectation that the County have sufficient capacity in the Reverse 911 System.

Recommendation 4, page 8: "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."

CCC Response: The City of Carpinteria intends to pursue this Recommendation. Within the next 12 months, the City will have researched such a system and determined it's feasibility including setup and operating costs. Subsequently, a recommendation will be made to the City Council.

Recommendation 8, page 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."

CCC Response: .No Response

Santa Maria City Council [SMCC]

RECOMMENDATION 3: Within Santa Barbara County, each city and special district dispatch center should establish its own independent Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System. This will reduce the possibility of overloading the Santa Barbara County Sheriffs Department and Lompoc Police Department Dispatch Centers in the event of a County-wide major disaster.

SMCC RESPONSE: The recommendation will not be implemented because the City has concerns regarding the overall effectiveness and benefits of a Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System. The City intends to continue to monitor the use of these systems in other populated areas of the State as well as evaluate the results of appropriate field testing in other communities prior to making a decision regarding any significant expenditure for such a system. The City has been working with local media to develop an acceptable Emergency Notification System through television and radio outlets that would ultimately provide relevant information to the Public in both English and Spanish

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.

SMCC RESPONSE: The recommendation has been implemented as the City currently provides support The City believes that County Office of Emergency Services (OES) should provide more oversight for the EPIC in order to provide better coordination and consistency between government agencies, the private sector, and all other interested participants as it pertains to emergency public information.

Santa Barbara County Executive Officer [SBCEO]

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.

SBCEO Response: This recommendation will not be fully implemented because the County does not have any jurisdiction over the radio stations, which are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. However, both the CEO and OES are working in partnership with the broadcasters in Santa Barbara County and developing a memorandum of understanding, which should be ratified by the Board of Supervisors and in use by the end of 2006.

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.

SBCEO 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.

Montecito Fire District [MFD]

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.

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. We agree with this recommendation and have begun planning its implementation. 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.

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."

Santa Barbara City Council [SBCIC]**Recommendation 3:**

"Within Santa Barbara County, each city and special fire district dispatch center should establish its own independent Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System. This will reduce the possibility of overloading the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department and Lompoc Police Department Dispatch Centers in the event of a County-wide major disaster."

SBCIC Response: The City of Santa Barbara concurs with and is taking steps to implement this recommendation. The City is actively investigating several Reverse 9-1-1 Emergency Notification Systems. The most recent demonstration viewed by Fire and Police Department staff was on June 8, 2006. Fire Department staff is also investigating the capacity and limitations of the County's reverse 9-1-1 system, to determine if there remains a viable option of sharing that resource in a way that is reliable and accessible during major emergencies

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."

Response:

The City of Santa Barbara concurs with and is taking steps to implement this recommendation.

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."

SBCIC Response:

The City of Santa Barbara concurs with and is taking steps to implement this recommendation.

Lompoc City Council [LCC]

City of Lompoc Response to Finding / Recommendation 3: The City of Lompoc is pleased to have purchased a *Reverse 911* emergency notification system through a grant provided by the Department of Homeland Security. The emergency notification system is programed only with telephone numbers located within the City of Lompoc. Therefore, the public safety dispatch center would not have the ability to conduct community notification for other jurisdictions. However, the Lompoc Police Department has an agreement with Santa Barbara County that would allow the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office to utilize our eight dedicated telephone lines in addition to their dedicated telephone lines to expedite emergency notification to the public. The community notification system also has a "mass call" feature that allows Santa Barbara County to utilize 10,000 telephone lines simultaneously should a large disaster occur county-wide.

City of Lompoc Response to Finding / Recommendation 4: The City of Lompoc has considered the use of a "Low-Power Radio Emergency Alert System" and consulted radio technicians regarding this proposal. We have determined that the unique topography of the Lompoc Valley would necessitate the use of several repeaters and result in a system that would be difficult to maintain. However, the City of Lompoc will continue to explore the feasibility of establishing a dedicated radio station for emergency notification purposes.

City of Lompoc Response to Finding / Recommendation 8: The City of Lompoc has always been committed to providing the highest level of preparation, communication and emergency services coordination for its citizens. We have participated in all County-wide disaster planning workshops, task forces and training sessions. The Lompoc Police Department has a long standing partnership with ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service), a local private shortwave radio group. We have participated in the Santa Barbara 211 system, through the web-site and telephone referrals, for individual incidents and city wide events. We will certainly support the efforts of the Emergency Information Communicators Group to improve emergency public information in the Lompoc Valley.

Board Of Supervisors [BOS]

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.

BOS Response: The Board adopted OES's response as its response. (The recommendation has been implemented.)

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.

BOS Response: The Board adopted both the CEO and OES's response as its response. (The recommendation will not be fully implemented because the County does not have any jurisdiction over the radio stations.)

Recommendation 3

Within Santa Barbara County, each city and special fire district dispatch center should establish its own independent Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System. This will reduce the possibility of overloading the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department and Lompoc Police Department Dispatch Centers in the event of a County-wide major disaster.

Response: The Board adopted the Sheriff Department's response as its response. (The recommendation will not be implemented by the Sheriff as it pertains to other agencies.)

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.

BOS Response: Response not required from the Board of Supervisors.

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.

BOS Response: The Board adopted both the CEO and OES's response as its response. (The recommendation has not yet implemented, but will be implemented by the end of 2006.)

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.

BOS Response: The Board adopted OES's response as its response. (The recommendation will be implemented in part by the end of the year, but will not be implemented as proposed by the Civil Grand Jury.)

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.

BOS Response: The Board adopted OES's response as its response. (The 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.)

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.

Response: The Board adopted both the Sheriff Department and OES's response as its response. (The recommendation has been implemented.)

Sheriff's Department [SD]

Recommendation 3: Within Santa Barbara County, each city and special fire district dispatch center should establish its own independent Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System. This will reduce the possibility of overloading the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department and Lompoc Police Department Dispatch Centers in the event of a County-wide major disaster.

Response to Recommendation 3: This recommendation will not be implemented by the Sheriff as it pertains to other agencies.

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.

Response to Recommendation 8: This recommendation has been implemented.