

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY GRAND JURY'S 2008-2009 REPORT
"SANTA BARBARA COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS –
Further Improvement Needed"

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 3: *There was no Joint Information Center during the course of the Gap Fire. The Joint Information Center was not set up until 21 hours after the start of the Tea Fire.*

Response to Finding 3: **The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding.**

Recommendation 3: *When an Emergency Operating Center is set up, the Joint Information Center should be activated immediately.*

Response to Recommendation 3: **The Sheriff's Department stands ready to participate in any Joint Information Center that is activated for any disaster or emergency situation.**

Finding 5: *The Reverse 911® system can be an effective method of notifying residents. However, it has had limited coverage in the County, communications are limited to English and many homeowners may not receive messages for a variety of reasons.*

Response to Finding 5: **The Sheriff's Department agrees in part with this finding and disagrees in part with this finding.**

Recommendation 5a: *That the Sheriff's Department inform and educate all County residents about the Reverse 911® system.*

Response to Recommendation 5a: **The Sheriff's Department has conducted extensive outreach on the Reverse 911® system. Through the Research and Planning Unit – Emergency Preparedness section, a number of educational sessions have been conducted and the Reverse 911® system purpose and use explained as the Department cooperates with others in emergency planning. An explanation of the system, its capabilities and registration process has been an integral part of community forums, neighborhood watch, crime prevention and evacuation drill preparation. The Sheriff's Department provides this service to the citizens of the unincorporated portion of the County of Santa Barbara, as well as to the citizens of the cities of Buellton, Solvang, Goleta and Carpinteria.**

Similarly, the Sheriff has brought up the Reverse 911® system and the registration process during press briefings during times of county emergencies. Our educational process must have had success as we registered almost 20,000 cell phone numbers during the GAP and TEA fires and are processing almost 10,000 additional requests as a result of the recent JESUSITA fire.

The Sheriff's website is the only County of Santa Barbara website that mentions the Reverse 911® system, has posted information, and has a method that allows registration of a cell phone for notification in future emergencies.

The City of Lompoc has its own Reverse 911® system and the Lompoc Police Department has a page on their website for a user to print to fill in and send to the Lompoc Police Department for registering an alternate phone number for notification with their Reverse 911® system. The City of Santa Maria has chosen another emergency notification system as has the city of Goleta. The Reverse 911® system has been used for the City of Goleta under its law enforcement contract with the Sheriff's Department, as it has been in the City of Guadalupe. Although the City of Santa Barbara does not have an emergency notification system, the Sheriff's Department has used its Reverse 911® system with their permission extensively for emergency notification in that city's jurisdiction.

The primary responsibility for educating citizens who reside in cities served by their own police departments about the Reverse 911® system should rest with those jurisdictions rather than the Sheriff's Department.

Recommendation 5b: *That the Sheriff's Department monitor and improve the Reverse 911® system to reach all residents, including those who are Spanish speaking.*

Response to Recommendation 5b: The Sheriff's Department continues to monitor and improve the performance of the Reverse 911® system. The Department purchased the Verizon Telephone database of all landline phone numbers within the County of Santa Barbara for use in emergency notifications. That database contains approximately 485,000 phone numbers and is updated weekly by Verizon. Each week, the Sheriff's Department receives approximately 3,500 changes to the Verizon database that is transferred to the Reverse 911® system, in order to maintain the accuracy of the landline database. Additionally, Sheriff's personnel have manually input into the Reverse 911® system another 30,000 plus cell phone numbers. At this point, the Sheriff's Department has within its Reverse 911® system database every telephone number available to the Department.

Sheriff's personnel continue to refine the method and manner that the Reverse 911® system is used to serve residents of the County of Santa Barbara. Inclusion of the Spanish speaking population is necessary and important. We are working with Reverse 911® company personnel to produce an emergency message where the recipient will have the option to receive it in either English or Spanish.