

August 26, 2005

The Honorable Allan D. Hardcastle
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Sonoma County
3035 Cleveland Ave., Suite 200
Santa Rosa, California 95403

RE: **Required Responses** (CA Penal Code 933c) to Grand Jury
Final Report – published June 28, 2005

The Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools, as an elected state constitutional officer, has the responsibility, pursuant to section 914.1 of the California Penal Code, to submit comments within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court regarding the Grand Jury Final Report of 2004-2005.

The Final Report reflected the hard work and professional dedication of the members of the County Civil Grand Jury. Additionally, the Report demonstrates the important role of the Grand Jury to provide valued public oversight to ensure the integrity of local government. I would like to commend Melinda A. Cabral, Foreperson of the Grand Jury, on her ability to build the capacity of her diverse team resulting in an investigative process that was thoughtful and respectful.

There are two separate Reports of the Grand Jury that require responses by the County Superintendent of Schools. The first report, "Protecting the County's Assets" resulted in a required response to Finding number F-16 and to Recommendations numbers R-9 to R-15, inclusive. For the purpose of readability and continuity, responses from individual school district Superintendents and the County Office of Education Deputy Superintendent may be integrated into a single report. All responses associated with the County's K-12 public school system will be enclosed or attached. In the second report "School Districts: Time for a Change?" the County Superintendent is required to address Recommendations numbers R-1, R-2 and R-3 only. Source documents may be attached and/or enclosed with all narrative responses to provide context or to serve as evidence of good-faith progress towards audit compliance.

Sincerely,

Carl Wong, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

Grand Jury Response

Protecting the County's Assets

F-14: All School District Superintendents are targeted to have completed SEMS-based plans by March 31, 2006

Response: The USDOE project is targeted to every school in Sonoma County and in accordance project objectives and with state law, is requesting that every school submit an annual SEMS/NIMS-compliant plan to the project (SCOE/USDOE) before December 31, 2005. The project is developing an Emergency Operation Plan template that, when completed in each district and by each school site, will meet the compliance requirement.

This requirement for district superintendents will be encouraged and assisted by the USDOE project but achievement of the objective will require priority commitment by each superintendent and direction by the County Superintendent of Schools. According to recent Grand Jury investigation reports (Napa County), it is our understanding that it is the responsibility of the County Office to assure that compliant annual plans are submitted and reviewed by the County Office and that Districts are held accountable for the quality of their emergency plans as part of their Safe School Plan.

Our current strategy is to distribute the Emergency Operation Plan template to all districts and schools before September 30, 2005 with a letter of request and instructions for compliance from the County Superintendent of Schools. The plan template will include three parts: 1) Guide to EOP planning, 2) Response Plan, and 3) Classroom and Administrative Offices Response charts.

On behalf of SCOE/USDOE the project will request that EOP plans be submitted for review and archiving. Submission by every school and district will meet both the grant objectives and compliance with state mandates.

Planned SCOE activities will address the following:

County Superintendent of Schools:

Provide leadership to all district superintendents in all Emergency Management activities on a continuing basis.

Meet with all district superintendents to discuss the importance of having SEMS/NIMS compliant plans.

Inform all SCOE staff of SCOE's Emergency Plan and ensure that all staff are allowed adequate time for training and exercise activities.

District Superintendents:

Meet with County Superintendent to discuss the importance of having SEMS/NIMS-compliant plans.

Provide leadership to their schools to ensure that the model plans are customized for each district and at each school site level.

Superintendents are further responsible for informing all district office staff of the plan and allowing adequate staff time for training and exercise activities.

School Principals:

Ensure that the *Classroom Quick Reference Guides* are provided to each teacher.

Post an *Administrative Quick Reference Guide* in the main office.

Inform all staff of the plan and allow adequate staff time for training and exercise activities.

Grant Staff:

Complete the model plan and provide to districts by September, 2005.

Provide ongoing support and resources to schools in the implementation and customization of the plan.

Produce *Quick Reference Guides* based on customized information received from districts and distribute to each district office, school office and one for each classroom.

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F16. In the existing pre-SEMS plans, the role of SCOE if a specific school or school district should incur a major disaster is unclear.

Currently, there is no clear system in place to coordinate information throughout the school community. A school closure process was established several years ago with SCOE coordinating the information and distributing it to local media. This system was developed so parents and staff could receive school closure information that was accurate and timely. The system has most often been utilized during severe winter storms and flooding incidents. Within school districts, there are usually systems in place to ensure that schools communicate with their own district office during an emergency, but beyond that, the process is unclear.

The agency to take primary responsibility for Emergency Management in our county should be determined as soon as possible. SCOE is one obvious choice because of its current relationship with the districts and the leadership role of the County Superintendent. However, RESIG has the expertise in Emergency Management and can fulfill this role as well. The County Superintendent and RESIG's Executive Director should meet to discuss the issues involved and make a decision as to which agency is to assume this role and the level of support that can be expected from the districts.

During a disaster of the magnitude that would require the activation of EOCs, there is no coordination of response or information beyond the district level. Using the SEMS/NIMS model, the appropriate flow of information should be from the school site → to the district office →to the appropriate city EOC (for response) **AND** to RESIG or SCOE (for coordination of information) →to the Sonoma County Op Area EOC →to the Coastal Region OES EOC →then to the State OES EOC [See Figure 1]. Right now there is no central collection point for the coordination of information when multiple schools or districts are involved in an incident (such as a large earthquake). The USDOE Grant is presently serving as the central source for information and services related to Disaster Planning and Emergency Management, but there is no system established to gather and coordinate information during an actual event. RESIG or SCOE can serve in this role if a system is put into place that clearly delineates this responsibility and the system is clearly communicated to all members of the school community. The advantage of having a central coordination point is to facilitate the most efficient and effective flow of information and resources. If this system can be established, it will aid in response efforts as well as in the recovery process. RESIG currently has a representative who serves in the Logistics Section of the Sonoma County Op Area EOC in the event of a declared disaster. This person's

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R9. Ascertain whether an extension to the USDOE grant timetable is possible, and determine if an extension would be desirable.

The term of the current grant expires on March 31, 2006. Additional funds are not available after that date. An additional USDOE Grant that will involve all of the five counties in Region I (Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Sonoma and Mendocino) is under development. Mendocino will be the LEA. We will not know the outcome of that grant until October of 2005. If the Region 1 grant is successful, some minimal funding will be available for Sonoma County to continue some of the projects being developed with current grant funds. However, additional funds will be necessary to provide on-going support of the current projects.

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R10. Review the letter from the US Department of Education regarding the Russian school hostage emergency, and expedite action and replies from all school districts.

The "Beslan" letter was sent to every Superintendent across the nation by the USDOE in October of 2004. This letter was also handed out to all participants at a USDOE Grant Administrative Workshop on January 12, 2005.

Many of the recommendations are already being included in the USDOE Grant activities. A RESIG representative serves on the Sonoma County Op Area Emergency Coordinator's Forum as well as the Op Area Emergency Council. This representative facilitates the link between the schools and law enforcement as well as other emergency response agencies.

Many of the recommendations contained in the letter require significant funds to accomplish. Budgetary restrictions may make these recommendations impossible to implement at the present time. However, many of the recommendations are already being addressed through grant activities or by the school districts themselves. Raising awareness in schools, among law enforcement agencies as well as in the community are primary focus areas of the USDOE Grant.

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R12. Ensure that the role of SCOE in actual post-disaster scenarios is identified and publicized.

See responses to F16.

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R13. Review the check-in/check-out procedures at the main (SCOE) facility and determine if a change is desirable.

In the spring of 2005, after extensive research with Sonoma County offices, other County Offices of Education, surveying staff, dialogue with bargaining group representatives, and review by the SCOE Safety Committee, the check-in/check-out system was discarded. The value of having an accurate check-in/check-out security system is being able to track who is in the SCOE building at any one time; however, there was no way to ensure reliable tracking. It was common for visitors to check-in, but fail to check-out. There is a registration system in place for workshops and meetings, so visitors can be accounted for in case of emergency.

RESPONSES TO SONOMA COUNTY GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT
R-14 Parent Communication
JUNE 2005 – *PROTECTING THE COUNTY'S ASSETS*

August 5, 2005

To: Carl Wong
From: Craig Zachlod

Following is my required responses to the Grand Jury and my personal recommendations for your consideration. In addition to explaining what we are doing about specific item F-14/R-14, I am also taking this opportunity to make recommendations to you in anticipation of the proposed Region 1 project. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you Jerry Johnson and Joe Myers to discuss recommendations on how SCOE/RESIG ought to proceed with or without the United States Department of Education grant. Sometime next week, I will be providing you with hard copies of the Region 1 project proposal as reference that will include all supporting documents.

R-14: Implement a common parent communication system as soon as possible.

Redundancy is the operative concept when it concerns emergency communication with parents. We are recommending that every school, district and The Sonoma County of Education have more than one alternative means of communicating with parents. We further recommend and encourage county-wide use of a common alert system. Secure Cops Alert Network (SCAN) is both economical and available to anyone who has access to a computer but it is not the solution for all parent communication challenges.

Public alert systems can be prohibitively expensive. There are many types of systems including telephone, computer and satellite systems. We (USDOE Project) recommend use of all affordable and redundant emergency alert systems.

We have chosen SCAN as the preferred Project alert system primarily because it is affordable (costs for our project have been waived so it is promised free forever) and accessible to almost everyone. SCAN will be available in Spanish later this year. SCAN alerts registrants via messages to their cell phones, computer e-mails, pagers, and even text messages. School, District, and County administrators can use SCAN to alert parents about everything from school closures to tsunami warnings. The service is free, available to anyone with computer, fax, pager or cell phone access and can reduce annual school site

August 23, 2005

To: Carl Wong

Fm: Jerry Johnson

Re: Responses to Grand Jury Report (R11 and R14)

The purpose of this memo is to provide the required responses to the Grand Jury Final Report - published June 28, 2005.

The responses to Recommendations R11 and R14 are to be made by the Deputy Superintendent of the Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools.

R11 - Develop a pro-forma action checklist for use by all schools in handling post-disaster tasks.

This checklist will be included as part of the USDOE Grant Model Plan Project that is currently being developed. It will be part of the RECOVERY portion of the plan. The comprehensive plan will be provided to the schools in September 2005. Training on the plan will begin during the 2005-06 school year. Ongoing training will be required beyond the term of the grant. The USDOE Grant also has a project to develop a Loss Recovery Resource Guide for Schools to help schools in their recovery efforts from a variety of losses.

R14 - Implement a common parent-contact system as soon as possible.

It is essential to make sure that all parents and guardians are provided with accurate, up-to-date information in the event of a disaster. Many parents work outside of Sonoma County and will be making every effort to return and retrieve their children as soon as possible. The media is often the only source of information for parents and these news reports can be incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. The USDOE Grant staff has researched several notification systems to notify parents and guardians in the event of a disaster. A common drawback to many of these systems is the need to maintain a huge database of contact information for each parent or guardian. Cost is often prohibitive as well. Currently, the staff is working on setting up a system called SCAN USA (Secure Cops Alert Network). The benefit of this system is that each parent or guardian signs up for the service on their own and they are responsible for updating their information -- not the school. They can also customize their service by zip code and by topic so they only receive alerts that are pertinent to their child's school or school district. It is also a **FREE** service which is an added bonus. Messages are generated at the school site and are then transmitted via cell phone text message, fax or e-mail. An alert will be received that directs subscribers to the SCAN USA website to view the message. The messages received through SCAN USA are posted in "real" time, which allows the school to provide up-to-the-minute information on topics such as school closures, incidents in progress, and status reports in large-scale events. This system cannot be the only method of communication because some parents don't have internet access -- which is required. The County of Sonoma Department of Emergency Services has access to a system called CityWatch which is a phone-tree system that can be activated regionally. This would allow schools to provide information to the county who would in turn activate the system to initiate a large volume of calls simultaneously. This CityWatch system is being evaluated for potential use by schools.

clerical costs of registering parents for alert listings. The biggest challenge of the SCAN system is that everyone must go online and register. School site, district, and offices of education must register as agencies and designate an authorized person to issue appropriate level alerts. The process is simple and explained online at <http://agency.scanusa.com>. Individuals (parents and others) also must register at www.scanusa.com and designate the types of alert messages that they want to receive. The directions on the site are clear and easy to follow. (See the attached SCAN motivational pieces and directions to be sent to all administrators and parents by the Project this fall)

Because some parents lack these amenities, however, we will also recommend school telephone trees, town hall meetings and other methods to alert parents

Issue an Emergency Alert and Contact Information Card (being designed by the Project)

Every year each parent should be issued a wallet size emergency alert and contact card with school registration information that would be filled out by them and contain the following information :

1. Telephone Tree Contact #s (at least two names)
2. SCOE Emergency Hotline telephone number
3. Call letters and dial number of local radio and TV stations that will carry bulletins/updates
4. Designated meeting place for children(s) rendezvous
5. *Schoolguard.org* for emergency and school release information
6. Medical emergency contact name and number

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R15. Complete an inventory questionnaire of school communication equipment.

Response: The Sonoma County Office of Education, in collaboration with the 40 Sonoma County school districts, is responding on behalf of all 40 of those districts. (Please see attached spreadsheet of responses.)

The Schools Communications Survey was distributed in the spring and summer of 2005. Surveys have been completed by 40 of the 40 school districts, 174 of 174 schools reporting. The results will be provided to the *School Guard* grant staff for compilation. The grant staff will develop a list of communication equipment needs and research possible funding sources for equipment needs.