



# OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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August 26, 2005

The Honorable Robert Boyd, Presiding Judge  
 Sonoma County Superior Court  
 600 Administration Drive  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: County Administrator Response to the 2004-2005 Sonoma County Grand Jury Report

Dear Honorable Judge Boyd:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your report. Following are the responses for the County Administrator. The letters and numbers make reference to reports titled A Disaster Waiting to Happen, Mental Health Services on the Mend, and Protecting the County's Assets.

## A DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN

### Required responses to findings

F3 Written plans and checklists are not consistent among county, cities, agencies, and departments, and in some cases are non-existent.

Response: Partially agree with the finding. I do not have the documentation to either affirm or disagree with the Grand Jury's finding. Assuming there is some variation between city plans and checklists, I can say the various agencies participating in emergency response all have different resources and capabilities. Through the work of the Emergency Services Department, the Sonoma County/Operational Area Emergency Coordinators Forum, and Emergency Council, County agency emergency response plans and policies are reviewed and discussed to strengthen coordination and consistency. In addition, the Emergency Services Department will be contacting cities to review their plans and provide any advice as requested. I defer to the County departmental response for additional explanation. I concur with their response.

F9 All county employees are listed as disaster recovery resources, as indeed are members of the grand jury, but there is no clear plan on how they will report in for duty, or how they will be used.

Response: Partially disagree with this finding. County employees are Disaster Service Workers and all new full-time County employees receive SEMS training including an introduction to the Emergency Operations Plan at New Employee Orientation. His or her supervisor will determine employee's specific roles and the Human Resources Department will coordinate scheduling. Grand Jury members are not full-time County employees and do not fall under the Disaster Service Worker criteria.

F12 There are no consistent plans to inform the public ahead of time of what information will be available at the time of a disaster, nor is there a consistent plan to make use of media, or the City Watch system in the event of a disaster. (The City Watch system is a software program that allows for sending informational or alert messages to a given geography of telephone users)

Response: Disagree with the finding. The County does have plans for providing public information regarding disasters. There is no standardized preplanned program, as specific disaster scenarios will require unique public notification and information. In addition, some preplanned responses to the public may be vague and inaccurate resulting in confusion and misinformation. The County does have templates for public notification on disaster scenarios in the Emergency Public Information Plan that can be adapted to the specific conditions.

- F14 There are no consistent disaster response checklists for law enforcement and public safety personnel, the two major agencies involved in every disaster. While law enforcement acknowledges SEMS, it relies on its normal critical incident skills to sustain its disaster response efficacy. There is too much reliance on a disaster being just another critical incident, basically "all in a day's work." As a result, there are no written policies and/or procedures that describe the responsibilities of the Sheriff's Department as part of the County Emergency Operations Plan.

Response: Disagree with the finding. The Emergency Operation Plan describes the responsibility of the Sheriff's Department as Operations Section Chief. These responsibilities include directing local resources, coordinating mutual aid responses, and coordination with incident commanders. The EOC contains specific checklists describing responsibilities of the Operations Section. I have personally witnessed Sheriff staff perform in their Operations Section Chief role in the Emergency Operations Center doing various large-scale exercises.

#### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION: ON THE MEND?

- R5 Insufficient consideration has been given to the Director's tenure affecting MHS Division turmoil. Mental Health Services should be examined by an oversight committee consisting of one or more representatives from the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, and the Director, Health Services to uncover the underlying reasons why MHS has lost four directors in the last 15 years.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented. I disagree with the statement "Insufficient consideration has not been given to the Director's tenure..." No one interviewed me on this topic. The situation in the Mental Health Division has been the subject of substantial attention from the Department, CAO, and Board. In addition, the relatively new Director of the Department of Health Services recently appointed a long-time division manager as Director of the Mental Health Services Division. He brings a wealth of knowledge and institutional history of issues and changes in the Division over the past 15 years. I give my full support to the new Mental Health Director.

#### PROTECTING THE COUNTY'S ASSETS

##### Required responses to findings

- F6 ISD tried the conventional approach of attempting to get its major users to reach consensus on which applications would take priority in the event of a major and prolonged outage of the computer systems. Like many other IS departments, they found the responses lackluster at best.

Response: Disagree partially with the finding. ISD is in the process of updating its Countywide Disaster Recovery Plan and did seek input from all County departments with a questionnaire. It is my understanding that some departments did not respond. ISD is proceeding with its update and when complete will circulate again to all County departments for their input. Before the plan is complete, all departments will have provided their input.

- F7 ISD is run on a full cost recovery basis, i.e., its expenditures are funded by charging user departments for their share of the computer usage, basically an equitable scheme. However there is no place in the cost recovery system to separately fund any unique expenditures for disaster recovery plans.

Response: Disagree with the finding. The technical infrastructure for Disaster Recovery is a baseline expense that all County departments receive benefit from. Costs for Disaster Recovery are included in department baseline computer costs. If unique disaster related projects are identified in response to a specific disaster, the Board of Supervisors can prioritize the project and approve funding. Furthermore, the County Administrator has delegated authority to properly respond to each unique disaster as they arise. Actual expenses associated with disaster recovery will be tracked separately.

- F26 As the grand jury uncovered in the "A Disaster Waiting to Happen" investigation, much of the detailed work in the disaster planning is done by a few dedicated mid-level staff people. This quickly leads to introspective approaches by the planner. Senior management is not providing the continuous effort to ensure that communication with the major stakeholders and junior staff is intensive and frequent.

Response: Disagree with the finding. As described in the response to F6, ISD is in the process of updating the Countywide Disaster Recovery Plan. The update includes review and input from department senior management. When approved by the Board, the Plan will be distributed to all County Departments. As in the past, department heads and senior management will be encouraged to make junior staff and other stakeholders aware of its requirements and provide training. With an organization the size of Sonoma County, most "detailed work" is done by "mid-level staff" with direction and review done by senior management. This topic is no different.

- F27 With regard to county departments, neither the Board of Supervisors nor the County Administrator calls for a periodic review of the disaster recovery nor business resumption plans.

Response: Partially disagree with the finding. While we disagree with the premise for this finding (annual review by the Board of Supervisors is appropriate and business resumption needs compete with life and safety needs), we do believe periodic review is warranted. This is why ISD is undertaking their current "Disaster Plan" project. This practice has occurred in the past and will continue.

### **Required responses to recommendations**

- RI Complete its initial disaster recovery plan by December 2005, and request the funding it calls for in time for the 2006-2007 budget cycle. This request should include a change in the manner by which such expenditures are funded, separately from recovery of ongoing ISD running costs.

Response: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. ISD will be completing its Disaster Recovery Plan by December 2005. Any resource needs and budgetary recommendations will be considered as part of future ISD budget requests.

- R2 Involve the major users more closely in the design of the new disaster recovery plan. This may need senior management directives to the major users.

Response: The recommendation will be implemented.

- RI8 Ensure that all disaster recovery and business-resumption planning efforts are continuously supported and reviewed by appropriate stakeholder groups.

Response: The recommendation will be implemented with caveats identified in the response to F27 above.

- RI9 Require that all county departments file a formal statement of their disaster recovery requirements, for computer-based and manual systems, with detailed descriptions of the necessary steps to return the business to normal.

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Response: This recommendation has been partially implemented. As suggested in R2 above, ISD will work with customer departments and stakeholders to determine countywide disaster recovery plans rather than have individual department requirements. However, it is anticipated that most county departments will have their own internal procedures for restoring their own operations. Due to security issues, some procedures may not be able to be included in a countywide plan. Countywide business resumption priorities will focus on public safety response and restoration of the most essential services.

Please contact me if there is any other information I can provide

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Bob Deis

County Administrator

c: Director Emergency Services Department  
Director Health Department  
Director Information Services Department.