

CAO/DEM Draft Response – Due 8/19/2021

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Emergency Alerts and Communications

Report Date: June 20, 2021

Response by: Sheryl Bratton Title: County Administrator

Agency/Department Name: Department of Emergency Management

FINDINGS: F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F19, F20, F21, F22, F24, F25

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F5, F6, F7, F19, F22, F24, F25

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F3, F4, F8, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F20, F21

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS: R1, R3, R4, R5, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R16, R17, R19

Recommendations numbered: R4, R5, R11 have been implemented.

(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

Recommendations numbered: R3, R13, R19 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.


(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

Recommendations numbered: R1, R9, R10, R12, R16, R17 require(s) further analysis.

(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.)

Recommendations numbered: _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 8/19/2021 Signed: 

Number of pages attached: 11

(See attached Civil Grand Jury Response Requirements)

**County Administrator/Department of Emergency Management Response to
"Emergency Alerts and Communications" Grand Jury Report**

We thank the Grand Jury for its attention to these functions which are so vital to the safety and health of our residents and visitors.

FINDINGS

We agree with these findings:

F5. Due to the limitations of the alert and warning systems, duplication of alerts and warnings across many platforms helps to get the messages to more residents of the county.

F6. The role of the Emergency Operations Center during recent emergencies has helped to improve the sharing of information among the many fire and police districts and the County as well as improving the consistency of messaging across alert and warning platforms; particularly, the Nixle, SoCoAlerts.

F7. The low-technology alert systems (for example hi-lo and air raid sirens), which do not rely on communication towers, provide essential backup during power outages and cellphone tower breakdowns during severe storms or fires.

F19. Various agencies, cities, and the public rely on the County Emergency Operations Plan for their disaster preparedness and best practices regarding the alerts and warning systems.

F22. San Francisco Bay Area Counties, of which Sonoma County is part of, has not yet submitted its annual Emergency Alert System plan to the State Emergency Alert System Committee of California as recommended by the 2019 State of California Alert and Warning Guidelines.

Note: As per the California state Emergency Alert System (EAS) plan, local entities are responsible for filing an EAS plan with the State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC). Sonoma County is part of the San Francisco Bay Area Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC). The Bay Area LECC has not met since sometime before 2010.

The SECC, which appoints chairs of the LECCs, has not met since 2011 and is effectively defunct. The federal government is currently considering mandating annual meetings of the SECC which could restart the LECCs and the updating of local EAS plans.

F24. Sonoma County has made good progress in Community Outreach and Preparedness since the 2017 Tubbs Fire, however; residents may not fully appreciate or realize that preparing for resiliency during emergencies is an ever-evolving process and requires ongoing attention.

F25. Government cannot help residents with everything during a disaster. Continued development and expansion of Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies, and Community Emergency Response Teams groups are deemed essential as major emergencies could overwhelm agencies' ability to fully reach and protect people and property.

Note: Community preparedness (individuals, families, neighborhoods) is the fundamental method for addressing emergencies and disasters. We fully concur that this effort requires ongoing and sustained efforts. Additional organizations that are critical to this effort include Map Your Neighborhood groups and Fire Safe Councils, Sonoma County is one of just a few local governments in California with a dedicated disaster preparedness program and staff.

Last month, the National Association of Counties (NACo) granted Sonoma County a 2021 Achievement Award for its program titled “Sonoma Ready Sonoma Strong: Community Preparedness Program” in the category of Risk and Emergency Management.

We disagree wholly or partially with these finding(s):

F3. During an emergency, residents in both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of Sonoma County receive multiple and at times conflicting messages.

We disagree partially with this finding.

We concur that residents may receive multiple warning messages. Multiple methods are needed to overcome the deficiencies inherent in each warning system (ex. “Cricket”-type cell phones cannot receive Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) messages). Also, the use of multiple systems and even multiple messages is a key psychological concept of warning in that individuals need to receive - or corroborate - information from more than one source before taking action – this activity is called “milling”.¹

Per the State of California Alert & Warning Guidelines, “People rarely act on a single warning message alone. To be effective, warnings should be delivered in various formats across multiple media platforms, both to increase reliability of warning delivery and to provide a sense of corroboration that will encourage recipients to take protective actions.”² Indeed, the use of multiple alerting systems is one of our County Alert & Warning program objectives. While the use of multiple systems can frustrate our residents, the failure to deliver a warning is certainly a much worse scenario.

Regarding residents receiving conflicting warning messages, the County has made very significant and effective use of warning systems with very low levels of actual conflicting information issued. In highly dynamic incidents, such as a wind-driven firestorm, residents receive information from official warnings as well as many other sources including media, social media, and fellow residents. In these incidents in which events are unfolding on a minute-by-minute basis, the latency of information delivered by various sources can often be a source of confusion.

We are aware of only one recent instance in the 2020 Glass Fire in which the Santa Rosa Police Department issued information via Nixle regarding evacuations which briefly conflicted with information being provided by the County of Sonoma. The City also elected to use the Emergency Alert System (EAS) although the County did not due to the massive spill over in messaging across the San Francisco Bay Area. The new Alert & Warning Annex includes policies and procedures to help prevent this from occurring in the future. However, cities retain the primary responsibility for warning their residents and retain the autonomy to do so.

Finally, this finding makes an assumption that public safety agencies and partners have a clear understanding of the situation but simply do not communicate that well. However, in the early hours of rapidly developing incidents - such as wildfire - efforts to warn residents are often significantly challenged by a lack of situational awareness. Incidents with this level of dynamic severity such as the 2017 or Glass Fires will continue to present communications challenges to residents and responders alike. In many cases, there simply is no clear picture of where the hazard is and which areas it threatens – in this case, public safety officials will err on the side of caution and provide warnings to areas that may be subject to risk.

¹ <https://martinlea.com/public-response-to-disaster-warnings/>

² <http://calalerts.org/documents/2019-CA-Alert-Warning-Guidelines.pdf>, p. 29

F4. There are some groups and individuals of the population who may not receive alerts directly; these include the elderly, tourists, farm workers, migrants, those hard of hearing, non-English speaking, and individuals with special needs.

We disagree partially with this finding.

While it is more challenging to provide warning services to some communities of Sonoma County residents (ex. migrant farm workers or deaf and hard of hearing), the County has developed a robust capability to reach most residents which has been demonstrated in the many recent disasters the County has experienced. Key to these efforts is the drive to ensure that public safety leaders can issue timely, accurate, and actionable warnings to all residents and visitors at any time. Additional work is being done to address social equity in all disaster preparedness programs including alert and warning.

F8. Due to the topography within Sonoma County, the re-institution of audible alarms such as air-raided sirens could dependably reach residents in remote areas and work as a reliable tried-and-true alarm system.

We disagree partially with this finding.

In 2018 and 2019, the Department of Emergency Management explored the potential for development of a network of outdoor audible warning sirens. The Department assessed best practices, siren technologies, systems limitations, vendor products, deployment strategies, initial/ongoing program costs as well as participating in field tests in Sonoma County. In 2018, the Department also applied for federal grant funding to further explore this option but was denied.

Please note - the effectiveness of outdoor sirens may be compromised by terrain, vegetation, urban development, and ability to be heard inside buildings.³ Modern building construction – including dual and triple-paned windows makes hearing this sirens very difficult – this has been seen in recent community evacuation drills in which vehicle-mounted Hi-Lo sirens were used.

Staff are continuing to assess the long-term potential for use of outdoor sirens in very specific hazard areas (ex. tsunami inundation zones).

F9. Different evacuation zone designations for the same area (numbers, names, streets, areas, etc.) by the County, cities, CAL FIRE and agencies can lead to confusion for residents during an emergency.

We disagree partially with this finding.

While different zones for the same area would be confusing, the County has adopted a standard set of evacuation zones that all public safety agencies will use. The County's zones for the unincorporated areas number more than 200 and so the naming convention integrates the regular Sheriff's Office patrol zone and a unique letter/number identifier. These 3 character zone names (ex. 2D3) are much easier to communicate and remember as opposed to the 6 character naming convention used in other counties like Napa (ex. NPA-E152).

The City of Santa Rosa elected to use a geographic naming convention for their zones as they have smaller and fewer zones to communicate to their residents than the County.

It is important to note that evacuation warnings and orders use not only the evacuation zone name but also provide a neighborhood name (ex. "Penngrove") as well as geographic description of the zone

³ https://www.midstatecomm.com/PDF/FEMA_guide.pdf

boundaries (ex. street name boundaries). This gives the recipient three different frames of reference they can draw on.

F10. Because evacuation zones were not published or known, prior to the recent emergencies, residents were unaware of their evacuation zones.

We disagree partially with this finding.

This finding implies that evacuation zones had been established but simply not communicated to County residents. Draft versions of the zones were used in the 2020 LNU Lightning Complex and Glass Fires. Once finalized in June 2021, the zones were immediately published and the County undertook a "Know Your Zone" community engagement campaign to help residents identify the zones in which they may work or live.

F11. Not all police and fire agencies within the County show an Evacuation Map on their website.

We disagree partially with this finding.

As of June 30, 2021, most cities and the County have posted all the evacuation zone maps or links to the maps on their respective government/public safety websites or social media sites. Some very small fire districts have not done so - most will reference the County's map which contains all zones across the County.

F12. The County communication network is at risk of communication tower/repeater equipment loss through delayed maintenance and failure to update obsolescent equipment, or disaster loss affecting the Sheriff's Department, city, police, fire agencies, and Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications.

We disagree partially with this finding

Sonoma County's Telecommunications radio-communications system is maintained by the Sheriff's Office Telecommunications Bureau (T-Comm). We understand that T-Comm has not delayed maintenance and does not agree that the system is at risk due to aged equipment.

F13. There is no backup system for the County communication towers/repeaters or for commercial cellular towers should they fail to function.

We disagree partially with this finding.

County communications towers

The County communications towers are maintained by Sheriff's Office and include a robust series of backups, in the event of primary power loss. All county communications towers maintained by the Sheriff's office have back up generators with enough fuel to power the tower for at least 10 days in addition to battery backup systems.

Commercial cellular towers

The County - along with other local governments - was successful in 2020 in petitioning the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to require that telecommunications providers provide state and local emergency responders with information directly about the areas that have lost, or may lose, service due

to the impacted infrastructure and requiring that outage maps be posted on public-facing websites. CPUC Decision 21-02-029⁴ requires 72-hours backup power for wireless providers in Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts – except for those facilities which the providers identify in their resiliency plans that don't need backup or are impossible to provide backup.

Per the CPUC map of areas that don't have sufficient backup, there are relatively few in Sonoma County that are at risk from power failure. See

<https://capuc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4ffc5f03a0e14f22a28e4f14aca20327> (dark blue is vulnerable). However without real-time system status reporting, we don't know if this is really what will occur during a major event.

Per CPUC Rulings 18-03-011⁵, 18-03-011⁶, and Decision 21-02-029⁷, the County of Sonoma has received emergency plans from wireless (U.S Cellular, Verizon, AT&T, TMobile) and wireline communications providers (Comcast, AT&T). The wireless broadband providers have made some progress in developing backup power for key sites but the overall status of this effort is not known.

The County has experienced loss of power and subsequent loss of wireless broadband systems as a result of wildfires in 2017, 2019, and 2020 and well as Public Safety Power Shutoff events in 2019 and 2020. In each of these, the ability to alert the public to life safety threats such as recent wildfires was compromised.

The County strongly supports additional proposed requirements for telecommunications service providers to give state and local emergency responders precise ZIP code updates of (1) facilities that are damaged or destroyed, (2) the status of facilities on backup battery or generator power, and (3) facilities that are offline.

F14. The County communication towers/repeaters and cellular provider towers are not maintained and protected (including defensible space) sufficiently to ensure alerts and warnings can go out in the event of a disaster.

We disagree partially with this finding.

County communications towers

Sonoma County's Telecommunications radio-communications system is maintained by the Sheriff's Office.

Commercial cellular towers

The County of Sonoma cannot respond to maintenance levels of the commercial cellular provider's infrastructure, equipment or systems.

F15. Department of Emergency Management towers in does not have documentation/maps of the physical location of the cellular provider communication the event of a disaster.

We disagree partially with this finding.

⁴ <https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M366/K625/366625041.PDF>

⁵ <https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Efile/G000/M328/K685/328685793.PDF>

⁶ <https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M343/K633/343633733.PDF>

⁷ <https://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M366/K625/366625041.PDF>

The commercial wireless broadband providers generally do not share the location of their infrastructure as they categorize that as proprietary information. Nevertheless, the County Department of Emergency Management does have locations of some sites that we procured to assist us in overcoming an identified flaw in the Wireless Emergency Alert where tower location could negatively impact the effectiveness of the system. This was a partial solution as the identified flaw was inherent in a specific cellular carrier's implementation of the WEA system.

However, due to change made in the system recently made after DEM reported the problem to FEMA, the flaw was rectified and the need for physical locations for cellular communications towers was made irrelevant. Tests conducted in March 2021 appeared to confirm this, although we will continue to test.

F20. Recommendations documented in After Action Reports following a disaster have not been incorporated into the current Emergency Operations Plans for Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management, the Sheriff's Office, Cities, and fire agencies.

We disagree wholly with this finding.

Since 2017, the County has developed several after action reports for wildfire, flood and power shut off incidents. Recommendations and actions from these AARs are a key element of ongoing improvements and program development. The AAR addressing the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the 2017 Fires has directly led to changes in organization and procedure. A key recommendation was to develop a new EOC facility which has now been incorporated into the County's Strategic Plan and Capital Improvement Plan.

Of course, not all the improvements can be immediately implemented – especially as the historic number and scope of recent incidents has necessarily prioritized response efforts over preparedness. That said, significant progress in implementing many AAR recommendations has been made in the last three years. AARs provide critical input as new plans are developed, new training offered, and new equipment purchased.

By way of example, recommendations made in the Alert & Warning AARs developed following the 2018 and 2019 warning exercises, the 2019 Kincadee Fire and PSPS events, and the 2020 LNU and Glass Wildfires have been incorporated into the new Alert & Warning Annex and the larger warning program.

The County's new Emergency Operations Plan which is expected to be approved by the Board of Supervisors by the end of 2021 further incorporate many other recommendations made in AARs as do the Annexes for Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) and Evacuation which have already been approved by the Board of Supervisors.

F21. The Warm Springs dam is under the control of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and local fire agencies do not have access to protocols established in the event that the dam fails.

We disagree wholly with this finding.

Army Regulations which govern the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provide for release of Dam Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) to agencies conducting official business. Agencies must submit a request and sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA).

The Department of Emergency Management is in possession of hard and electronic copies of the draft 2019 Warm Springs Dam Emergency Action Plan EAP. However, the County remains subject to the NDA which restricts release of the EAP.

USACE recently (October 2020) announced that it would no longer restrict to only public safety and emergency management officials the release of Inundation Maps which are part of Dam EAPs. However, electronic access to those maps will not occur until late 2021 and USACE must determine for each dam if the security risks outweigh the benefits of releasing the maps.

The Department of Emergency Management has not received any prior requests for the EAP from any government or public safety agency.

Note: the County's 2020 General Plan Safety Elements summarizes the hazards posed by dam failure along with other natural hazards. The plan includes a map showing dam inundation which can be found at http://sonoma-county.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=430&meta_id=142327. A revised version of the dam failure inundation map will be included in the County's new Local Hazard Mitigation Plan which is currently available for public review and comment at <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Long-Range-Plans/Hazard-Mitigation-Update/>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alerts and Warnings

R1. By October 31, 2021 the Sheriff's Office, Department of Emergency Management, and nine cities' departments include within their Emergency Operations Plans action steps to reach all subpopulations within the County who may not otherwise receive an alert. (F4, F6, F7, F8)

Response: Recommendation R1 has not been implemented and may not be implemented.

The recommendation is vague. The County's Alert & Warning Annex addresses the challenge of reaching all segments of communities and identifies strategies and procedures to support this effort.

R3. By October 31, 2021, the Department of Emergency Management explain the challenges behind the emergency communications in order that residents may understand, trust, and appreciate the complexity and the ongoing work it takes to maintain effectiveness. (F3, F5, F19)

Response: Recommendation R3 has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future.

The Department of Emergency Management will work with public information staff in the County and with stakeholder agencies to develop messaging and information products related to this subject. The challenges associated with emergency communications are one the key focus that staff address in speaking with residents at town halls and other informational events. The need to have as many types of warnings at the ready has become a clear topic in these presentations

Evacuations

R4. By October 8, 2021, the Sheriff's Office, Department of Emergency Management, and nine cities work together to ensure consistent naming for all evacuation maps used by the public and first responders. (F9, F10, F11)

Response: Recommendation R4 has already been implemented.

The consolidated map of County unincorporated and city evacuation zones is located at www.SoCoEmergency.org/evacuation-map. These zones are used by first responders and in public communications as per the Alert & Warning Annex to the County's Emergency Operations Plan as approved by the County Board of Supervisors on April 11, 2021.

R5. By October 8, 2021, the Sheriff's Office, Department of Emergency Management, and nine cities work together to ensure the public is informed of their evacuation zones by publishing evacuation maps in local media, online, and through SoCo Emergency. (F9, F10, F11)

Response: Recommendation R5 has already been implemented.

In a coordinated effort by Sheriff's office and Emergency Management, a "Know Your Zone" campaign launched on May 21, 2020. This included County and Sheriff's social media, press releases, and direct communication with local neighborhood leaders to help the public learn their zones. The efforts also included multiple town hall meetings, and Emergency Management developed a community tool, Evac Packs, which include Know Your Zone sticker to note zone on for future reference. The "Know Your Zone" campaign continues through the summer and fall, and will be refreshed annually for the public. A preparedness calendar has been developed and "Know Your Zone" is an annual topic in May preparedness efforts.

Infrastructure

R9. By December 31, 2021, the Department of Emergency Management work with Permit Sonoma to identify where all cellular provider towers are in the county. (F14, F15)

Response: Recommendation R9 has not been implemented and may not be implemented.

Commercial wireless broadband providers are not required to and do not voluntarily share the location of their infrastructure as they categorize that as proprietary information. Nevertheless, the County Department of Emergency Management does have locations of some sites that we compiled when testing the WEA system, and recognized after later testing that issues that the problem we were testing for had been corrected by the specific cellular company voluntarily pursuant to a request from FEMA and the FCC. The compilation of cell tower locations is no longer seen as relevant information required for the optimal use of our Alert and Warning systems.

R10. By October 31, 2021 the Sheriff's Office and Department of Emergency Management work with the Fire Agencies in the county work ensure that defensible space standards (as outlined by CAL FIRE) are met for all county communication towers/repeaters and cellular provider network towers. (F12, F13, F14)

Response: Recommendation R10 has not been implemented and may not be implemented.

County communications towers

Sonoma County's Telecommunications radio-communications system is maintained by the Sheriff's Office.

Commercial cellular towers

The County of Sonoma cannot respond to maintenance levels of the commercial cellular provider's infrastructure, equipment or systems.

R11. By September 30, 2021, The Sheriff's Office and Department of Emergency Management work with the Fire Agencies in the County to define actions to take during a disaster for the protection of all County communication towers/repeaters and cellular network towers. (F12, F13, F14)

Response: Recommendation R11 has been implemented.

The Sheriff's Office and Department of Emergency Management coordinate with CalFire and local fire agencies during disasters to preserve life and safety including the protection of essential communications infrastructure.

R12. By December 31, 2021, the Department of Emergency Management work with cellular tower providers to ensure a plan is developed to ensure defensible space standards are implemented around each tower. (F12, F13, F14)

Response: Recommendation R12 has not been implemented and may not be implemented.

The Department of Emergency Management does not establish building or infrastructure safety requirements for cellular tower providers but, as partners in public safety, will support this effort.

Emergency Operations Plans

R13. By October 31, 2021, the Department of Emergency Management update the County Emergency Operations Plan to incorporate and post on the Department of Emergency Management website the most up-to-date information and Recommendations from the After Action Reports since the disasters of 2017 (F19, F20)

Response: Recommendation R13 has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future.

The Department of Emergency Management is currently developing a new County Emergency Operations Plan and expects to present it for review and approval by the Board of Supervisors in the 4th Quarter of 2021.

The Department of Emergency Management has, and will continue to, post onto its website all After Action Reports (including recommendations) for disasters experienced since 2017.

R16. By September 30, 2021, Department of Emergency Management obtain from the US Army Corps of Engineers a copy of the Emergency Operations Plan for Warm Springs Dam and incorporate it into the County Emergency Operations Plan and post it on the Department of Emergency Management website. (F21)

Response: Recommendation R16 has not been implemented and may not be implemented.

Army Regulations which govern the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provide for release of Dam Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) to agencies conducting official business. Agencies must submit a request and sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). The Department of Emergency Management is in possession of hard and electronic copies of the draft 2019 Warm Springs Dam Emergency Action Plan EAP. However, the County remains subject to the NDA which restricts release of the EAP.

USACE recently (October 2020) announced that it would no longer restrict to only public safety and emergency management officials the release of Inundation Maps which are part of Dam EAPs. However, USACE electronic access to those maps will not occur until late 2021 and USACE must determine for each dam if the security risks outweigh the benefits of releasing the maps.

Note: the County's 2020 General Plan Safety Elements summarizes the hazards posed by dam failure along with other natural hazards. The plan includes a map showing dam inundation which can be found at http://sonoma-county.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=430&meta_id=142327. A revised version of the dam failure inundation map will be included in the County's new Local Hazard Mitigation Plan which is currently available for public review and comment.

R17. By December 31, 2021, Department of Emergency Management, through the San Francisco Bay Area Counties, submit its annual Emergency Alert System Plan to the State Emergency Alert System Committee of California as recommended within the 2019 State of California Alert and Warnings Guidelines. (F22)

Response: Recommendation R17 has not been implemented and may not be implemented.

As per the State Emergency Alert System (EAS) plan, the County does not unilaterally submit an annual EAS plan to the state. The County does so as part of the San Francisco Bay Area Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC) which has not met since 2010.

The State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC), which appoints chairs of the LECCs, has not met since 2011 and is currently being reconstituted by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES). The federal government is currently considering mandating annual meetings of the SECC which could restart the LECCs and the updating of local EAS plans.

Community Outreach

R19. By December 31, 2021, the Department of Emergency Management publicize the work of community preparedness groups such as Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies, Community Emergency Response Teams, and Community Organizations Around Disasters to more effectively reach all residents about emergency alerts and warnings. (F4, F24, F25)

Response: Recommendation R19 has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future.

The Department of Emergency Management does support COPE, CERT and COAD groups efforts currently in a number of ways. Along with Map Your Neighborhood groups and Fire Safe Councils, DEM provides speakers and program support to these groups, provides materials for distribution, and encourages new group formation regularly. Staff member sits on the Board of the Northern Sonoma County COPE, and presents monthly to the leadership group at their meetings.

A full page on SoCoEmergency.org/get-ready website is devoted to Neighborhood efforts. In all public engagement opportunities, the importance of Neighborhood Preparedness efforts is highlighted. These efforts will be enhanced and prioritized over the next two years to continue to support growth in this important activity.

DEM has applied for federal grant funding to supplement this support. Community preparedness funds will work to develop leadership in areas where groups are not present, and fund existing group's efforts to help them grow and strengthen. If approved, the grant for CERT programs will provide full-time assistance to grow this program countywide.