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COUNTY OF SONOMA

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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 Sheriffs Department as part of the County Emergency Operations Plan.

Response: Disagree with the finding. The Emergency Operation Plan describes the responsibility of the Sheriffs 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.

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

Bob Deis

County Administrator

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