



ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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SHERIFF-CORONER
SANDRA HUTCHENS

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

August 13, 2015

Honorable Glenda Sanders
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, California 92701

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury 2014-2015 report, "Orange County Emergency Operations."

Dear Judge Sanders:

In accordance with Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, enclosed please find the Orange County Sheriff's Department and Orange County Emergency Management Council's response to the FY 2014-2015 Orange County Grand Jury report, "Orange County Emergency Operations." If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Sheriff Lee Trujillo at (714) 647-1839.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Hutchens".

Sandra Hutchens
Sheriff-Coroner

cc: Peter Hersh, Grand Jury Foreman
Members, Board of Supervisors
Frank Kim, County Executive Officer

FINDINGS

F.1

The Grand Jury finds that all previous recommendations by prior Grand Juries concerning the physical status of the primary Emergency Operations Center have been adequately addressed.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

F.2

The Grand Jury finds that the backup system for Internet data communications at the Loma Ridge Emergency Operations Center is a limited capability satellite link, which is far less capable than the primary system and may prove to be inadequate.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

F.3

The Grand Jury finds that a comprehensive, feasible alternate Emergency Operations Center plan with multiple site options and activation instructions has not been developed.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

F.4

The Grand Jury finds that a mock exercise to test the alternate plan and to teach participants what to do in the event of a loss of the primary Emergency Operations Center at Loma Ridge has not been held in over ten years.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

R.1

The Grand Jury recommends that an additional high-speed network connection to Loma Ridge be installed to provide Internet redundancy to mitigate risk of degraded communications. Consider installing a separate underground fiber optic cable feed to the Emergency Operations Center.

Response: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.*

The Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) agrees that communication redundancies are vital for all essential public safety facilities, and with the critical components which exist at the Loma Ridge facility, diverse communication pathways are of paramount concern. In 2014, OCSD identified a lack of redundancy in communications systems while evaluating short term and long term needs of the Loma Ridge facility. The OCSD Research and Development Division recommended the department initially secure a design contract to best identify redundancy options for the County, with construction funding subsequently proposed in the following year.

This project design was submitted as a Capital Project Request by the Emergency Management Division and prioritized for funding in OCSD's FY 15-16 Proposed Budget. After review by the County budget office, this project was not recommended for funding in FY 15-16.

In order to fully address the long term needs at the Loma Ridge facility, an updated review of the requirements for the Emergency Operations Center, Emergency Management Division, Communications Division, and the Emergency Communications Bureau are needed. In addition, appropriate funding will need to be allocated to support project implementation. This project is expected to span multiple years from development to implementation. In the meantime, OCSD will continue to request funding for this vital project.

R.2

The Grand Jury recommends that a comprehensive, feasible alternate Emergency Operations Center plan be developed, with multiple site options and activation instructions.

Response: *The recommendation will be partially implemented.*

The Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) agrees that the County of Orange requires a dedicated alternate Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to ensure essential public safety functions are carried out reliably under all circumstances. Orange County's threat and hazard landscape plays host to multiple catastrophic scenarios, which all have a geographic impact. Strong emergency planning requires the establishment of an alternate facility in an area significantly distant from the current EOC to ensure one area wide disaster does not affect both facilities. Currently, Orange County relies upon partner agency EOCs to fill the gap for an alternate facility, although the facilities may not be available during a widespread emergency situation. The concept of employing a portable EOC solution capable of deploying to multiple site options, is not feasible for sustained, complex emergency management operations. The County's immense responsibilities require a large number of responders to co-locate within one facility, supported by information systems, communications systems, and equipment.

Rather, establishing a dedicated alternate EOC, or building a new EOC and using the Loma Ridge facility as the alternate, will ensure Orange County maintains a robust response capability. Building a new facility will guarantee the structure employs new disaster resistant construction; includes multiple, diverse communication pathways; incorporates current and future technology infrastructures; optimizes space; and addresses required security components.

The OCSD Research and Design Division completed a Loma Ridge Infrastructure Study in May 2015. This study details the financial challenges in modernization costs as well as limitations to the possible expansion of the Loma Ridge facility. Using the Loma Ridge location as the redundancy to a new state of the art facility will place the County in a better position to manage emergencies for the dynamic and diverse Orange County community.

In the meantime, the Emergency Management Division will augment existing emergency plans to include a detailed procedure for the activation of an alternate EOC site. For the alternate EOC Plan to become fully operational, additional personnel and equipment funding is necessary. Currently, the Emergency Management Division budget does not include sufficient funding to support the establishment of an alternate EOC Plan. With a budget that is largely dependent

upon external revenue sources tied to grant or program deliverables, this recommended project is unfunded.

The alternate EOC Plan will be completed by June 30, 2016, contingent upon appropriated funding.

R.3

The Grand Jury recommends that regularly scheduled exercise drills be held to test the alternate Emergency Operations Center backup plan and train all participants in the procedures to be followed in the event of loss of the primary Emergency Operations Center at Loma Ridge.

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) agrees that the County of Orange will augment current Emergency Operations Plans and expand upon alternate facility options. Once this has been completed, the Emergency Management Division will develop and produce an emergency exercise to test the activation procedures for the alternate Emergency Operations Center. With the expectation that the detailed procedure for the activation of an alternate Emergency Operations Center site will be completed by June 30, 2016, the subsequent alternate Emergency Operations Center exercise will be conducted by June 30, 2017. Exercise objectives will include equipment testing, communication procedure evaluation, the ability to access virtual plans and procedures, and personnel mobilization to the alternate Emergency Operations Center site. The Emergency Management Division will include this exercise into the Division's Training and Exercise Schedule with a test frequency of every 4 years, unless pre-empted by a real emergency activation of the alternate Emergency Operations Center site.