



County of Orange

County Executive Office

August 29, 2018

Honorable Charles Margines
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: Response to Grand Jury Report, "Can the Emergency Operations Center Survive a Catastrophic Event?"

Dear Judge Margines:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. The respondents are the Orange County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive Office.

If you have any questions, please contact Lilly Simmering of the County Executive Office at 714-834-6748.

Sincerely,

Frank Kim
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc: FY 2017-18 Orange County Grand Jury Foreman
Lilly Simmering, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, County Executive Office



Responses to Findings and Recommendations 2017-18 Grand Jury Report:

“Can the Emergency Operations Center Survive a Catastrophic Event?”

SUMMARY RESPONSE STATEMENT:

On June 20, 2018, the Grand Jury released a report entitled: “Can the Emergency Operations Center Survive a Catastrophic Event?” This report directed responses to findings and recommendations to the Orange County Board of Supervisors (Board) and the Orange County Sheriff’s Department (OCSD). OCSD will be filing its response separately; below is the response from the Board.

FINDINGS AND RESPONSES:

F.1. The only access road to the Emergency Operations Center is narrow, with a number of dangerous winding turns, imperiling safe vehicle passage.

Response: **The respondent partially agrees with the finding.** The safety of the emergency personnel who are critical to addressing major county-wide emergencies are of utmost priority for the Board; therefore, it will work with OCSD to ensure the road is accessible to those who need to be there. The Board acknowledges that the access road is narrow; however, to date, it has not received any reports of safety issues with the road.

F.2. The only alternative exit is an unpaved jeep trail that is narrower and more dangerous than the main access road and is unsuitable for vehicle passage.

Response: **The respondent partially agrees with the finding.** Although the Board does agree that the jeep trail is narrow and perhaps unsuitable for vehicle passage, OCSD is the better department to determine whether the conditions of the trail are unsuitable for vehicle passage. Therefore, the Board will defer to OCSD on that part of the finding.

F.3. The failure to properly maintain the area around the Emergency Operations Center and eradicate the overgrowth of weeds impairs visibility and presents a major fire hazard.

Response: **The respondent disagrees with the finding.** The Board understands that OCSD's clearance requirements for the contractor it hired to conduct weed abatement around the EOC meets the requirements set by the fire code.

F.4. The Orange County Sheriff's Department has been unable to fulfill the County's responsibility to maintain the Emergency Operations Center's access road, including weed abatement and road repairs.

Response: **The respondent disagrees with the finding.** The EOC is a valued asset of the County. It has and continues to be an essential part in mitigating major emergencies in the county. OCSD is entrusted with ensuring the maintenance of the EOC's access road and OCSD has indicated that it has a formal contract with a private contractor to perform weed abatement twice per year.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES:

R.1. By September 1, 2018, the County should consider assigning responsibility for maintaining the land around the Emergency Operations Center, as well as the road to the facility, to the Orange County Public Works Department, which has staff with expertise in the field.

Response: **This recommendation has not been implemented and will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.** Although OC Public Works has experience, the maintenance of the road is currently within the responsibility of OCSD and is therefore, not open to the public. In order for OC Public Works to assume maintenance and repair responsibilities, the road would have to become open to the public. This would not be advisable given the sensitive nature of the work done at the EOC.

R.2. By December 1, 2018, the County should have plans in place to repair and widen the current access road, enhance and add turnouts, or add a new access road to provide safe travel to and from the Emergency Operations Center.

Response: **The recommendation requires further analysis.** The Board has a vested interest in ensuring the safety of all emergency personnel who work at the EOC or are valued members of the Incident Response Teams; however, the responsibility of maintaining the road is that of OCSD's. Should OCSD decide that it is going to repair the road, the Board will be willing and available to assist in any way it can.

In the meantime, the County has initiated a study of whether or not to relocate the EOC to a new location within the County where access is not restricted due to poor road conditions.

R.3. By December 1, 2018, the County should have a contract in place to ensure regular weed abatement around the Emergency Operations Center and along Loma Ridge Road.

Response: **The recommendation has already been implemented.** The Board has a vested interest in ensuring the safety of all emergency personnel who work at the EOC or are valued members of the Incident Response Teams; however, the responsibility of maintaining the road is that of OCSD's. The Board's understanding is that a contract for weed abatement for areas around the EOC already exists.

R.4. By January 1, 2019, the County of Orange and the Sheriff's Department should initiate a study regarding the ability to use the Loma Ridge Jeep Trail as an emergency exit route from the Emergency Operations Center.

Response: **The recommendation requires further analysis.** The Board has a vested interest in ensuring the safety of all emergency personnel who work at the EOC or are valued members of the Incident Response Teams; however, the responsibility of maintaining the road is that of OCSD's. Should OCSD decide that it is going to repair the road, the Board will be willing and available to assist in any way it can.

In the meantime, the County has initiated a study of whether or not to relocate the EOC to a new location within the County where access is not restricted due to poor road conditions.