



# ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY

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Keith Richter, Fire Chief

(714) 573-6000

[www.ocfa.org](http://www.ocfa.org)

August 5, 2019

The Honorable Kirk Nakamura  
Presiding Judge  
O.C. Grand Jury  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Judge Nakamura,

Subject: OCFA Response to Grand Jury Report "Emergency Public Information - Should I Stay or Should I Go?"

At its July 25, 2019, meeting, the Orange County Fire Authority's Board of Directors approved and authorized the attached responses to the Findings/Conclusions and the Recommendations to the Grand Jury Report entitled "Emergency Public Information - Should I Stay or Should I Go?" as requested.

Please feel free to let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Sherry A.F. Wentz, CMC  
Clerk of the Authority

c: **Grand Jury Foreperson Birgit Sale**  
Clerk of the Board Robin Stieler

Enclosure: OCFA Response to the Grand Jury Report "Emergency Public Information - Should I Stay or Should I Go?"

**Grand Jury Response: "Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?"**

August 5, 2019

The Honorable Kirk Nakamura  
Presiding Judge  
Orange County Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

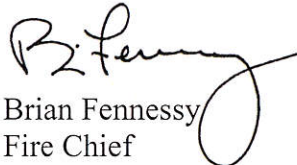
Your Honor,

The Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) Board of Directors reviewed the Grand Jury report entitled, "Emergency Public Information - Should I Stay or Should I Go?" during its public meeting held on July 25, 2019. The Board has reviewed and authorized this formal response from our agency.

We appreciate the time and effort the Grand Jury has devoted to the citizens of Orange County and we share its dedication to fair and transparent governance.

If I may be of service in the clarification of this response, please feel free to contact me at [brianfennessy@ocfa.org](mailto:brianfennessy@ocfa.org) or (714) 573-6010.

Sincerely,

  
Brian Fennessy  
Fire Chief

cc: Orange County Grand Jury

**MINUTES  
ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY**

**Board of Directors Regular Meeting**

**July 25, 2019  
6:00 P.M.**

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**3. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**B. Response to Grand Jury Report Regarding Emergency Public Information  
(F: 20.04A12)**

On motion of Director Hernandez and second by Director Johnson, the Board of Directors voted unanimously by those present as required by the Grand Jury, to approve and authorize the Clerk of the Authority to submit to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court the Orange County Fire Authority's response to the Orange County Grand Jury report entitled "Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?"

## Grand Jury Response: “Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?”

### Summary

#### Response to Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 1:** Lack of coordination among the involved agencies caused Emergency Public Information sent out about evacuations during the Canyon 2 fire to be inconsistent, and confused residents.

#### Discussion

*The OCFA agrees in part and disagrees in part. An emergency was rapidly progressing and there was no time to wait for the Emergency Operation Center to make proper notifications. Public safety agencies have a responsibility to coordinate messaging to ensure the public will receive factual and concise information. That practice is challenged by media messaging, social media posts and a wildfire that was quickly escalating. In this case, it was a matter of life and death and the best information at the time was sent.*

**Finding 3:** No training standards for Public Information Officers exist and there are no formal written protocols for issuance of mass notification, including required training on the use of mass notification systems.

#### Discussion

*The OCFA agrees in part and disagrees in part. There is formal Public Information Officer (PIO) training for those responding on behalf of OCFA for a wildland fire incident; however, there is no required training on the mass notification system as this is not a function of OCFA.*

**Finding 5:** The lack of a standardized written protocol for Alerts and Warnings decreases the ability of the County and its Operational Area jurisdictions to speak with one voice when it comes to alerting the public during emergencies.

#### Discussion

*The OCFA agrees in part and disagrees in part. Even with a plan, it is difficult to have one voice. Each agency is responsible for communicating to its own residents and what is impacting one area may not be the same as another area in a major incident. A Joint Information Center would help, as would a PIO at the command post.*

**Finding 9:** The County and interviewed cities do not seek sufficient public feedback of the perceptions of effectiveness of the Emergency Public Information.

#### Discussion

*The OCFA agrees in part and disagrees in part. When feedback and comments are received following an incident, every effort is made to consider the comments, possibly make changes, and respond with accurate information. An online survey can be considered as a proactive method to seek out feedback.*

## Grand Jury Response: “Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?”

**Finding 10:** The lack of standardized emergency management terminology among the various jurisdictions within Orange County causes delays and confusion in the dissemination of Emergency Public Information.

### Discussion

*The OCFA agrees consistency is important and helpful. Using standard terminology would provide for clearer messaging for the community.*

**Finding 11:** Orange County jurisdictions and the California Highway Patrol lack a joint plan for evacuation routes, thus evacuations can be chaotic, creating increased potential for danger to residents.

### Discussion

*The OCFA agrees. More work and coordination are required.*

**Recommendation 3:** By September 30, 2019, the County Emergency Operations Center, the six cities interviewed by the Grand Jury and Orange County Fire Authority should adopt a standardized written protocol for issuance of mass notifications and require training on their software systems, whether the WEA service, AlertOC or any other system is utilized. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5)

### Discussion

*The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in part. OCFA will engage with the County of Orange on this system. This effort cannot be accomplished by this deadline.*

**Recommendation 7:** By September 30, 2019, The Orange County Sheriff’s Department and each interviewed city’s Emergency Management Division should adopt a proactive process by which residents impacted by an emergency can easily provide feedback regarding their experience with Emergency Public Information, such as by telephone, mail-in, and/or online surveys. (F9)

### Discussion

*The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented by September 30. A Survey Monkey can easily be posted on the OCFA website to receive feedback and be promoted via social media and general media for response following a major incident. We may need assistance in developing appropriate survey questions. A telephone or mail survey would be quite costly to public agencies.*

**Grand Jury Response: “Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?”**

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**Recommendation 8:** By September 30, 2019, a task force, made up of representatives from all Operational Area jurisdictions, public safety Public Information Officers, and state public safety professionals, such as California Highway Patrol, should be created to develop an emergency operation plan for large, wide-spread disasters. (F11)

**Discussion**

*The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented by September 30. OCFA will coordinate with the County of Orange to implement this recommendation.*