



City of Mission Viejo

Office of the Mayor and City Council

Greg Rathb
Mayor

Brian Goodell
Mayor Pro Tem

Wendy Bucknum
Council Member

Trish Kelley
Council Member

Edward Sachs
Council Member

September 9, 2019

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

RE: Response of the City of Mission Viejo to Orange County Grand Jury 2018-19 Report, dated June 19th, 2019, titled "Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?"

Dear Judge Nakamura:

In accordance with Section 933.05(a) and (b) of the California Penal Code, the City of Mission Viejo submits the following response to the report, findings and recommendations of the 2018 – 19 Orange County Grand Jury report published June 19th, 2019, entitled, "Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?"

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

Per page 17 of the Grand Jury Report, the City of Mission Viejo is required to respond to Grand Jury Findings F1, F2, F3, F5, F9, F10, F11. Those responses are provided.

F1. *Lack of coordination among the involved agencies caused Emergency Public Information sent out about evacuation during the Canyon 2 fire to be inconsistent, and confused residents.*

The City of Mission Viejo partially disagrees with this finding. The City of Mission Viejo was not impacted by the Canyon 2 Fire. The City monitored the situation status reports sent out by the Operational Area but it was not necessary to send out emergency public information regarding evacuations.

F2. *Some emergency management personnel, tasked with creating and disseminating Emergency Public Information, in a rapidly-evolving, multijurisdictional emergency did not fully understand their roles and responsibilities.*

The City of Mission Viejo disagrees with this finding. The City has designated EOC personnel who receive training in their respective roles and responsibilities under the incident command system. City EOC personnel, including EPI staff, attend the California Specialized Training Institute 4-day course in San Luis Obispo at the National Guard Headquarters. The course



gives in-depth training in all SEMS positions, including the Public Information Officer's role and responsibilities. City staff also received training as part of an EOC operations training and exercise conducted by FEMA instructors in January 2019. The training included 3-days of instruction with a functional exercise. City employees also attend SEMS specific training conducted by the County Operational Area staff.

- F3. *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 system.***

The City of Mission Viejo disagrees partially with this finding. Although there are no such protocols for the mass notification system (AlertOC), the County offers AlertOC and WebEOC training on a regular basis. Best practices are shared amongst those in attendance. It would be beneficial to have formal protocols in place for all cities to model.

- F5. *The lack of a standard written protocol for Alert and Warnings decreased the ability of the County and Operational Area jurisdiction to speak with one voice when it comes to alerting the public during emergencies.***

The City of Mission Viejo potentially disagrees with this finding. The City of Mission Viejo was not directly impacted by the Canyon 2 Fire nor provided any Emergency Public Information to the public. The City has an approved Emergency Public Information Guide as part of its Emergency Operations Plan that provides staff with guidance on the proper procedures in disseminating information to the public. In an emergency that impacts the region, staff would follow the plan and coordinate under a unified command structure with surrounding jurisdictions, other agencies and the County, in order provide accurate and timely information dissemination. If necessary, a joint information center would be established to assist in the coordination of public information.

- F9. *The County and interviewed cities do not seek sufficient public feedback of the perceptions of effectiveness of the Emergency Public Information.***

The City of Mission Viejo City partially disagrees with this finding. The City provides numerous outlets for the dissemination and feedback of emergency public information, which includes the City's social media presence, whereby questions and feedback are tracked by the public information officer and routed to the person most knowledgeable to generate a response to the public.

In the event of an emergency broadcast through AlertOC, message recipients are able to respond to messaging via e-mail or by telephone. Callers with questions about the system messages are returned by staff.

The City also has a community mobile app (Mission Viejo Life) that is designed to provide our residents, businesses and visitors with access to the City through



their electronic communication devices, giving them opportunity to access City Hall, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. Staff responds to questions and comments from the public, usually within 24-hours, or sooner based on the urgency of the inquiry.

The City also conducts periodic community surveys through a professional consulting firm in order to gauge perceptions regarding overall preparedness and public safety.

F10. *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.*

The City of Mission Viejo agrees with this finding. Orange County jurisdictions participate in monthly general emergency coordination meetings as well as quarterly AlertOC/WebEOC subcommittee meetings. Differences in emergency management terminology has been discussed and efforts are ongoing to come up with standardized terminology, especially with respect to evacuation orders. This is not only a challenge for jurisdictions within Orange County, but through out other regions of California.

F11. *Orange County jurisdictions and the California Highway Patrol lack a joint plan for evacuation routes, thus evacuation can be chaotic, creating increased potential for a danger to residents.*

The City of Mission Viejo agrees with this finding. As a contract City whose Law Enforcement Services are provided by the Orange County Sheriff's Department, emergency evacuations are conducted through coordination between both the Sheriff's Department and the CHP. In a large evacuation event, a Unified Command Post would be established with multiple agencies (OCSD, OCFA, CHP, City agencies, etc...) where evacuation instructions would be formulated and disseminated to the public. As further evacuation planning is an identified need in this report, the City will involve emergency management and law enforcement staff from Mission Viejo to participate with the County's coordination of this effort.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Per page 18 of the Grand Jury Report, the City of Mission Viejo is required to respond to Grand Jury Recommendations R2, R3, R4, R7, R8. Those responses are provided immediately below.

R2. *By December 31, 2019, the Board of Supervisors, should establish minimum standards/expectations for individual cities who voluntarily participate in centralized Emergency Public Information planning activities in order to protect public safety during multijurisdictional emergencies. (F1)*



Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The City participates in working groups and sub-committees established by the County of Orange/Operational Area and will continue to provide input and direction from the City's perspective in any centralized Emergency Public Information planning activities coordinated by the County.

- R3. *By September 30, 2019, the County Emergency Operations Center, the six cities interviewed by the Grand Jury and the Orange County Fire Authority should adopt a standard 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)***

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

The Operational Area is working on the Alert and Warning Plan and will include emergency mass notification protocols, training requirements and guidance on use of the system. The City will participate in the review of the plan through the Orange County Emergency Management Organization (OCEMO) participation process. The timeline for this task will be at the Operational Area/County's direction. Once developed, the City will implement plan specifics as they pertain to the City's alert and warning procedures

- R4. *By September 30, 2019, the six cities interviewed by the Grand Jury should pre-select facilities with sufficient technical capability and various sizes that are readily accessible to all authorized personnel for use as potential Joint Information Centers, so they can be activated in a timely manner. (F1)***

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. In June 2013, the City of Mission Viejo hosted a Joint information Center training and exercise program at the Norman P Murray Community Center (JIC). The facility has phone and WIFI capabilities with large meeting rooms that were set up as a JIC for the County wide exercise. If requested by the OA, this facility could be activated as a JIC location. The City supports the further build-out of identified JIC Locations with sufficient technological capabilities to maintain a JIC.

- R7. *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 telephone, mail-in, and/or online surveys. (F9)***



Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The City has a community mobile app (Mission Viejo Life) that is designed to provide our residents, businesses and visitors with access to the City through their electronic communication devices, giving them opportunity to access City Hall, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. Staff responds to questions and comments from the public, usually within 24-hours, or sooner based on the urgency of the inquiry. A web-based platform is also available to receive public information or concerns, with responses generated by staff in a timely fashion.

The City also receives feedback through its robust social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and responds to questions and concerns in a timely fashion – usually within 24 hours in a none emergency situation.

- R8. *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)***

Response: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The County and the Operational Area are tasked with coordinating regional planning efforts, which include various emergency-specific working groups, including completing updates to the County Operational Area Plan. The City participates in monthly OCEMO committee meetings and special sub-committee meetings established by OCEMO. Should a special task force be established by the Operational Area as described, the City will send staff to participate in the planning efforts.

Sincerely,



Greg Raths,
MAYOR

C: Orange County Grand Jury

