



# County of Orange

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County Executive Office

September 10, 2019

Honorable Kirk H. Nakamura  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

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

Dear Judge Nakamura:

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 Lala Oca Ragen of the County Executive Office at 714-834-7219.

Sincerely,

Frank Kim  
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc: Orange County Grand Jury  
Lala Oca Ragen, Assistant Deputy Chief Operating Officer, County Executive Office



Responses to Findings and Recommendations  
2018-19 Grand Jury Report:

*“Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?”*

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**SUMMARY RESPONSE STATEMENT:**

On June 19, 2019, the Grand Jury released a report entitled “Emergency Public Information – Should I Stay or Should I Go?” 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:**

**F1. 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.**

**Response:** The respondent partially agrees with the finding. The safety of the public and emergency personnel is critical to handling emergencies and are of utmost priority for the Board. Emergency Operations Center personnel worked with public safety agencies to coordinate the release of accurate information to the community. As fires such as Canyon II and Holy Wildland are typically a fast-moving situation, the County and the community did take quick action based on first responders’ direction to evacuate, resulting in no lives lost.

**F5. 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.**

**Response:** The respondent partially agrees with the finding. Management of the Canyon II and Holy Wildland fires spanned multiple jurisdictions. OCSD is the better department to address the review of alert and warning plans that may need expansion and improvement for coordinated communication to the public during emergencies. Therefore, the Board will defer to OCSD on that part of the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES:

**R1. By September 30, 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 will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. For emergencies spanning multiple jurisdictions, the County through OCSD is already addressing the review and update of emergency plans relating to evacuations, joint information, alerts, and warnings. However, the Board cannot require other local agencies to adopt minimum public information standards and expectations related to their emergency planning activities. While individual cities are responsible for setting their own emergency public information plans, they are encouraged to participate in ongoing emergency planning and discussions, including public information and dedicated support towards a full emergency management program such as the County of Orange and Orange County Alert and Warning Plan and the Joint Information System Annex to the Unified County of Orange and Orange County Emergency Operations Plan.

**R2. By December 31, 2019, using the authority derived from R1 (above), the Emergency Operations Center should establish specific minimum standards/expectations with regard to coordination and dissemination of Emergency Public Information that follow SEMS guidelines, by which committed cities must comply for multijurisdictional emergencies. (F1, F5, F10)**

**Response:** This recommendation is currently being implemented. The County through OCSD is in the process of reviewing existing emergency plans addressed in this recommendation, relating to evacuations and joint information systems, as well as and alert and warning plans that are under development. However, as stated in the response to recommendation R1 above, cities are responsible for setting their own emergency public information plans, standards and expectations.