



September 11, 2019

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

SUBJECT: CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH RESPONSE TO THE 2018-2019 ORANGE COUNTY JURY REPORT. "*EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION – SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?*"

Dear Judge Nakamura:

The City Council has authorized me to submit the City of Laguna Beach's response to the 2018-2019 Grand Jury report regarding emergency public information. In accordance with the California Penal Code, the City's response addresses the Orange County Grand Jury Report finding and recommendations pertaining to the City of Laguna Beach.

**Responses to Findings F1, F2, F3, F5, F9, F10, F11**

**Finding 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 City of Laguna Beach was not involved in the Canyon 2 Fire and therefore, it has no basis to agree or disagree with the finding.

**Finding 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.**

Response: The City of Laguna Beach was not involved in the Canyon 2 Fire and therefore, it has no basis to agree or disagree with the finding.

**Finding 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 systems.**

Response: The City of Laguna Beach disagrees with this finding. The City's Public Information Officer resides within the Police Department and is required to take a Police Officer Standard in Training (POST) Public Information Course to act in that capacity. Additionally, the City of

Laguna Beach currently has a written protocol for Alerts and Warnings that includes how they are issued.

**Finding F5: The lack of 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 City of Laguna Beach partially agrees. A standardized written, Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan is important to provide guidance; however, the City of Laguna Beach will still speak directly to its community for emergency alert and warning. Local jurisdictions typically have the most up-to-date information, understand their communities best, and can provide more timely emergency alerts. The City of Laguna Beach supports establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC) for multijurisdictional incidents.

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

Response: The City of Laguna Beach partially agrees. Obtaining public feedback for areas of improvement is important; however, it needs to be done in a compassionate and tiered process. This carefully tiered process is especially important in incidences where loss of life or property has occurred.

**Finding 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.**

Response: The City of Laguna Beach partially agrees. Laguna Beach participated in the development of the Operational Area Evacuation Plan and has adopted similar evacuation terminology that includes an action word (immediate or potential) in front of the evacuation terminology. This terminology worked extremely well during the Aliso Fire in June of 2018 where the City conducted Immediate Evacuation Orders of over 2,500 residents within the Top of the World neighborhood.

**Finding F11: 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.**

Response: The City of Laguna Beach agrees with this finding.

#### **Responses to Recommendations R2, R3, R4, R7, R8**

**Recommendation 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: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented once the Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan is completed. The Orange County Board of Supervisors has no authority over the City of Laguna Beach regarding this matter. Nonetheless, this recommendation is already being addressed with the Operational Area Joint Information Center Plan and the development of the Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan – both which complement the City's local Alert and Warning Plan and policies.

**Recommendation R3: 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 notification and require training on their software systems, whether the WEA service, AlertOC or any other system is utilized. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5)**

Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The City of Laguna Beach has a plan but is willing to work with the Operational Area to develop an Alert and Warning Plan.

**Recommendation R4: By September, 30, 2019, the six cities interviewed by the Grand Jury should pre-select facilities with sufficient technical capability and of 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: This recommendation has not yet been implemented but could be implemented during the next Operational Area Joint Information Center (JIC) Plan revision. The City of Laguna Beach agrees this pre-planning should be done. Additionally, the City of Laguna Beach is finalizing a Memorandum of Agreement with at least one neighboring City that includes the sharing of emergency management facilities that could also be used as a JIC.

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

Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The City of Laguna Beach did include a feedback survey during our Wireless Emergency Alert Test in March of 2019 where we received nearly 2,000 responses. During real events, obtaining public feedback for areas of improvement is important; however, it needs to be done in a compassionate tiered process. This careful tiered process is especially important in incidences where loss of life or property has occurred.

**Recommendation R8: By September 30, 2019, a task force, made up of representatives from all Operational Area jurisdictions, public safety Public Information Officers and state**

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**public safety professionals, such as California Highway Patrol, should be created to develop an emergency operations plan for large, wide-spread disasters. (F11)**

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented; however, the City of Laguna Beach will schedule a meeting prior to the deadline with the local California Highway Patrol Commander to discuss and collaborate on evacuations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Pietig". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.

John Pietig  
City Manager

cc: City Council