

July 11, 2006

The Honorable Judge Rodney Melville  
Superior Court  
312-M East Cook Street  
Santa Maria, CA 9345-5165

Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury  
Attention: Foreman  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: CEO response to Civil Grand Jury Report on Disaster Preparedness

To Honorable Judge Melville:

Please find the County Executive Officer's responses to the pertinent findings and recommendations contained within the various sections of the Civil Grand Jury report on disaster preparedness issued May 15, 2006. Specifically, these sections include the "Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center" and the "Emergency Public Information."

### **Emergency Operations Center**

**Finding 1:** The Santa Barbara County EOC is housed in a temporary modular building that is not rated for an emergency government function and could fail in an earthquake.

**Response:** The CEO agrees with this finding.

**Recommendation 1:** The Board of Supervisors and County Administration should immediately prioritize the process of identifying a new site for the EOC that meets construction standards for emergency government functions.

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. The CEO has identified a new site for the EOC that meets construction standards for emergency government functions.

The identified site is at the Santa Ynez Airport and staff have been collaborating with the Airport Authority and the Federal Aviation Administration on the logistics of developing a new EOC at this location. The CEO and the Board of Supervisors have committed funding toward the construction of a new EOC. Specifically, the Adopted 2006-2007 Budget includes \$3 million for a new EOC. Additionally, the Sheriff has committed \$300,000 and an additional \$1.7 million may be allocated toward the EOC contingent on financial health of the County's General Fund (bringing the project total to \$5 million). The County Architect has commenced with the drawing of a conceptual design of the new EOC.

**Finding 6:** Presently there is no motivating factor that requires the County Administrative Officer or County department heads to keep emergency and disaster training as a high priority for themselves or their employees.

**Response:** The CEO disagrees with this finding. One motivating factor that requires the County Executive Officer to keep emergency and disaster training as a high priority is that emergency management is a requirement of the job responsibilities for this position. Specifically, the areas of responsibility and accountability for the County Executive Officer as contained in the job description for this position include "emergency management: Controls and directs the effort of the emergency organization of the county; appoints and supervises the coordinator of the office of emergency services; provides leadership in the development of public policy; acts as liaison with other agencies; has authority to proclaim a "state of emergency" when locally available resources are inadequate to cope with the emergency" .

The County Executive Officer, as noted in Ordinance No. 4564, is the ex officio Director of Emergency Services. For example, he has coordinated and commanded emergency efforts for the County during various emergencies related to severe winter storms, flooding, tsunami warning and fires. Both the County Executive Officer and several County Department heads such as General Services, Fire (includes OES staff), Public Health, Public Works and Sheriff have made training regarding disasters a high priority for themselves and essential employees within their respective departments.

Furthermore, emergency training has been provided to many department heads and other executives. For example, the County sponsors ten spaces each year for department heads and managers to attend a four day course on Emergency Operations Center/Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) Training for earthquakes and other disasters at the California Specialized Training Institute. The County Executive Officer and Deputy County Officer have attended this training in the past. Training in National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) has commenced in departments such as Public Health, Sheriff, Fire and OES rolling the training out to all their employees. Various County employees involved in the County's pandemic flu planning efforts have also undergone this type of training. NIMS/SEMS training will be required of all department heads starting in the beginning of 2007.

The County has developed specialized plans and training for potential incidents and emergencies as they become apparent threats. Some of these include:

- Operational plans for dealing with weaponized anthrax resulting from a national, regional or localized terrorist attack.
- Operational planning, training and exercises on the potential of a large scale mass refugee influx resulting from a terrorist attack or threat of terrorist attack on a major neighboring metropolitan area such as Los Angeles.
- Development of a detailed Operation's Plan and Training (presently underway) to manage when and if a large scale Avian Flu Pandemic becomes prevalent in the region, nation, or the world. Currently, seventy-five County managers, executives and employees are working in twenty project teams to develop a detailed operation's plan for this eventuality. This plan will be presented to all executives and managers at the 2006 County Management Congress on November 3, 2006.

**Recommendation 6:** Incorporate emergency related functions and employee training in emergency preparedness in the job descriptions of the County Administrative Officer and department managers and as a goal in their annual performance evaluations.

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented in part and the remainder of the recommendation will be implemented in the beginning of 2007. The County Executive Officer job description already requires emergency management and preparedness. Specifically, the County Executive Officer "controls and directs the effort of the emergency organization of the county; appoints and supervises the coordinator of the office of emergency services; provides leadership in the development of public policy; acts as liaison with other agencies; has authority to proclaim a "state of emergency" when locally available resources are inadequate to cope with the emergency."

The County Department Directors annual "Executive Performance Appraisal and Plan" currently contains an assessment on the Director's cooperation in emergency preparation and operations as well as an assessment of whether the Director has completed appropriate emergency preparedness and operations training for his/her department. Furthermore, NIMS/SEMS training will be required of all department heads starting in the beginning of 2007.

All new employees receive a briefing on their responsibilities as County employees when they attend mandatory New Employee University Orientation at the Employee University. This orientation includes a 1 hour segment on SEMS (Standardized Emergency Management System), a thorough review of the various sections of the Emergency Operations Center and a discussion on the County's Disaster Worker policy as outlined in the employee's handbook.