

October 10, 2006

The Honorable Judge Rodney Melville
Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara Superior Court
312–M East Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454-5165

**Subject: City of Santa Barbara Response to 2005-2006 Civil Grand Jury Report on
“Disaster Preparedness – Emergency Public Information”**

Dear Judge Melville:

The City of Santa Barbara has received and reviewed the report of the 2005-2006 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury report titled “Disaster Preparedness – Emergency Public Information.” The City Council approved this response at its regular meeting on June 27, 2006. This letter addresses Recommendations 3, 4 and 8, as required.

Recommendation 3:

“Within Santa Barbara County, each city and special fire district dispatch center should establish its own independent Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System. This will reduce the possibility of overloading the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Department and Lompoc Police Department Dispatch Centers in the event of a County-wide major disaster.”

Response:

The City of Santa Barbara concurs with and is taking steps to implement this recommendation. The City is actively investigating several Reverse 9-1-1 Emergency Notification Systems. The most recent demonstration viewed by Fire and Police Department staff was on June 8, 2006. Fire Department staff is also investigating the capacity and limitations of the County’s reverse 9-1-1 system, to determine if there remains a viable option of sharing that resource in a way that is reliable and accessible during major emergencies. In any case, the City is committed to the strategy of establishing a reverse 9-1-1 capability that will work for all parties concerned.

Recommendation 4:

“All areas within Santa Barbara County that have the unique topography and vulnerability to wildfires or flooding should install a Low-Power Radio Emergency Alert System to warn their residents.”

Response:

The City of Santa Barbara concurs with and is taking steps to implement this recommendation.

In May 2004, the City of Santa Barbara adopted a Wildland Fire Plan. One of the key objectives in the plan deals with improved communication and evacuation strategies in the City’s high fire hazard zones. A low-power radio emergency alert system is among the emergency alert strategies being considered by the Fire Department to alert residents in areas vulnerable to wildfires.

To fund this and other objectives outlined in the Plan, the City conducted a process, asking property owners in selected wildland fire areas for approval to establish a benefit assessment district. Approved by voters this month, a new funding source was established that will accelerate the City's efforts on evacuation planning in the area. The timing of procurement of such a system was determined, in part, by the passage of the benefit assessment district mentioned above.

Recommendation 8:

"All participating agencies should continue to support the efforts of the Emergency Public Information Communicators Group (EPIC), which is dedicated to improving the emergency public information system throughout Santa Barbara County."

Response:

The City of Santa Barbara concurs with and is taking steps to implement this recommendation.

City staff has and will continue to actively support the EPIC (as evidenced by their near perfect meeting attendance record). This effort is an example of inter-agency coordination and cooperation and should result in more effective public information dissemination in times of major emergencies.

A footnote to this response to the Grand Jury Report is the City's developing enhancements in our Office of Emergency Services (OES). As of this month, the City's OES functions and programs are being moved from the Police Department to the Fire Department. The City is interviewing candidates this month in order to fill a newly established full-time Emergency Services Manager position. This newly funded resource will greatly improve the City's disaster preparedness capabilities and enhance our coordination with the County's OES Division. The Fire Department will move its full time Public Education Officer position into the newly formed OES Division in order to further enhance our disaster preparedness/community awareness activities.

In closing, on behalf of the City Council, I would like to thank the County Grand Jury for the close examination of community emergency preparedness and for the thoughtful recommendations for a safer county-wide community.

Sincerely,

Marty Blum
Mayor

cc: Santa Barbara Grand Jury, w/ cd attachment, Attention: Foreman
City Council Members
City Administrator Jim Armstrong
Fire Chief Ron Prince
Police Chief Cam Sanchez
City Clerk's Office

October 10, 2006

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

Dear Grand Jury Foreman:

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City Council Members
City Administrator Jim Armstrong
Fire Chief Ron Prince
Police Chief Cam Sanchez
City Clerk's Office

Attach: copy of letter on Computer Disk in Word format