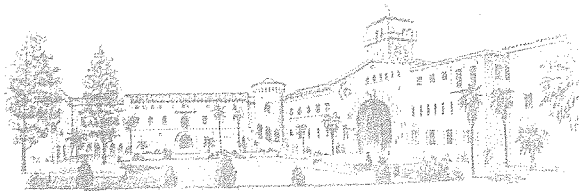


COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

Michael F. Brown
County Executive Officer



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EXECUTIVE OFFICE

June 26, 2009

The Honorable Judge J. William McLafferty
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street, 2nd Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1107

And

The Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Attention: Foreperson
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Judge McLafferty and Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Foreperson:

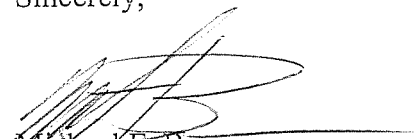
The County is sending to you with this letter the joint response from the County Executive Officer (CEO) and the Emergency Operations Chief for the County Office of Emergency Services (OES) regarding the findings and recommendations of the 2008-2009 Grand Jury Report entitled "*Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center – How Many More Delays?*"

The CEO and OES were both asked to respond to Findings 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The County Executive Officer thanks the Grand Jury for its findings and recommendations on this important matter.

Please call either of us if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,


Michael F. Brown
County Executive Officer

Michael Harris
Emergency Operations Chief

Attachments

Attachment 1

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND THE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES
JOINT RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY REPORT:

“Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center; How Many More Delays?”

SUMMARY

The following is a joint response by the Santa Barbara County Executive Officer (CEO) and the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to the 2008-2009 Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury Report, *“Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center; How Many More Delays?”*

The OES was reorganized in 2007 and placed within the office of the CEO. Previously located in the County Fire Department, OES is more appropriately located in the CEO's Office because of the management role of the OES rather than the operational role fulfilled by departments. The CEO also serves as the Emergency Services Director for the unincorporated County and the Santa Barbara County Operational Area (Op Area); the Emergency Operations Chief reports directly to the CEO. In its report the Grand Jury correctly states, *“...it is critical that we establish an EOC that is dedicated, protected, efficient, and large enough to accommodate all necessary personnel.”* The Grand Jury went on to state, *“To ensure adequate coordination in the wake of all types of emergencies, a more secure EOC must be established.”*

Over the course of time the Board of Supervisors and the CEO have diligently designated capital project funding for a permanent EOC. Staff has appeared before the Board of Supervisors on multiple occasions explaining the EOC, its function and made recommendations as to the need for a **permanent** dedicated facility. The facility planned and funded over the past years is ready to be constructed and only needs final authorization of the Board of Supervisors to go forward. The current economic downturn, falling governmental revenues, and the threat of state revenue takeaways has caused the Board to defer a final decision on this project inasmuch as basic County services are threatened. It is established local government financial practice that static sources such as the Capital Funds, set aside for projects such as the EOC, not be used to fund current operations. This notwithstanding, the project is on hold pending developments in the current state funding crisis. It is the firm and repeated recommendation of the CEO and the Emergency Operations Chief that the County follow its adopted capital improvement plan and construct the permanent EOC. It is also the CEO's and Emergency Operations Chief's continued recommendation that the County not dilute or waste the resources currently and previously committed to a permanent EOC for the development of yet another interim EOC. In the last decade the County has constructed facilities for law offices of District Attorneys, a variety of medical and mental health clinics, administrative offices for elections staffers, real property assessor staffers, solid waste managers, public works managers, planners, and other staff functions. It

has also constructed a new juvenile hall, a jury assembly building, improvements to veterans' halls, numerous office renovations, court administrative facilities, nature centers, swimming pools, parks and parks structures, vehicle maintenance buildings and other facilities. In most cases these facilities were constructed with dedicated categorical revenues which could only be used for the purpose of the facilities so constructed. Repeated efforts to obtain federal and state grants, lobbying of state and federal officials, requests that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act include funding for such a facility and other efforts have failed to provide funding for this purpose. Accordingly, the funding for the EOC was carefully nurtured and saved from the County's true local discretionary General Fund over a period of years.

Again it is our firm and continued recommendation that the County execute its plan to construct and operate a permanent EOC which has been designed and is ready for public bidding. As of the preparation of this response, the EOC facility would be ready for public bid in August of 2009, potentially awarded in December and constructed by fall of 2010.

BACKGROUND

During an emergency or disaster, it is imperative that a community respond in a coordinated and organized manner. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) describes an EOC as a **permanent** facility where management of an emergency takes place¹.

A permanent facility rather than a command trailer(s) or bus(es) is recommended because mobile facilities are appropriate for on-scene incident command post as part of an operation, but not for an emergency management center. Mobile facilities lack the capacity to accommodate the significant staffing associated with an emergency management center for a large and complex Op Area.

As reported to the Grand Jury in recognition of the seismic vulnerabilities of the current interim EOC, OES purchased emergency tenting. This tenting is not viewed by OES as **the** solution to building a permanent EOC but is meant to supplement emergency operations as needed, e.g., an emergency command post, a public health treatment area, etc., or to act as a temporary EOC should the current EOC become damaged. Should a permanent EOC, which would meet essential building standards, be built alternate EOC sites would still be required.

At the January 8, 2008, Board hearing the OES staff provided a recommendation regarding the EOC and the need for back-up facilities. The recommendation stated, *"It is important that a "back-up" EOC be developed. Specifically, staff should develop two contingency plans:*

¹ <http://www.all-hazards.com/LGP/library/CPG1-20/120CH3.pdf> (Page 25)

- *The previously approved Betteravia administration building improvements should incorporate a back-up data center and telephone systems, other communication methods and a configuration that, in case of need, can be used as an alternate EOC; and,*
- *Staff should attempt to develop a flexible EOC deployment strategy such as using specialty tents normally used in field combat and command centers.”*

The overall objective of emergency managers in the EOC is to ensure the effective management of response forces and resources in preparing for, responding to and recovering from situations associated with natural disasters, technological incidents and national security emergencies. Specific EOC goals in an emergency are to save lives, protect property and the environment. These goals are accomplished by the following emergency management objectives:

- Manage and coordinate overall emergency response and recovery operations;
- Coordinate and liaison with appropriate federal, state, and other local government agencies, as well as applicable segments of private sector entities and volunteer agencies;
- Establish priorities and resolve any conflicting demands for support;
- Prepare and disseminate emergency public information to alert, inform and guide the public;
- Disseminate damage information and other essential data; and
- Insure the survival of government and key safety services by maintaining functionality. Failure of local government to be prepared, lead and maintain governmental authority and protection during emergencies was clearly evident during Hurricane Katrina and reported to the nation by the Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina².

An EOC provides a location of authority and information, and allows for face-to-face coordination among personnel who must make emergency management decisions. The development of a permanent EOC is critical in providing the building to meet these objectives. The following functions are performed in the EOC:

- ✓ Managing and coordinating emergency operations;
- ✓ Receiving and disseminating warning information;
- ✓ Developing, training and exercising emergency policies and procedures;
- ✓ Collecting intelligence from, and disseminating information to, the various EOC representatives, and, as appropriate, to county and state agencies, military, and federal agencies;

² <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/creports/katrina.html> (Congressional Reports: H. Rpt. 109-377 – A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina)

- ✓ Preparing intelligence and information summaries, situation reports, operational reports, and other reports as required;
- ✓ Maintaining general and specific maps, information display boards, and other data pertaining to emergency operations;
- ✓ Continuing analysis and evaluation of all data pertaining to emergency operations;
- ✓ Controlling and coordinating, within established policy, the operational and logistical support of departmental resources committed to the emergency;
- ✓ Maintaining contact and coordination with field units, and other local government, special district, and departmental EOCs; and,
- ✓ Providing emergency information and instructions to the public, making official releases to the news media and producing of press conferences as necessary.

As reported to the Grand Jury on October 6, 2008, upon the appointment the County's Emergency Operations Chief, the individual was tasked to review previous EOC planning efforts and return to the CEO and the Board of Supervisors with recommendations on proceeding with a permanent EOC. A report to the Board was made on January 8, 2008, with a recommendation to place a permanent EOC at the 4400 block of Cathedral Oaks Road. The EOC Capital Project has been and remains in the County's adopted 2009-2010 Capital Improvement Budget³. In addition, plans developed for the Betteravia Government remodel include plans for an alternate backup EOC⁴.

In its report, the Grand Jury reports that the "Director of the Santa Barbara OES" (meaning the Emergency Operations Chief) had not toured, "... *either adjacent county's* (sic) EOC...". This is not accurate; the Emergency Operations Chief participated in a significant full-scale exercise at the San Luis Obispo EOC in October 2008, which included full access to that Op Area EOC. Professional staff from OES have previously been in the Ventura EOC and are familiar with the Ventura EOC's layout and functionality. Moreover the County's EOC design consultant, the Austin Company, has design experience of several EOCs nationwide. The Austin Company's participation provided impartial input and guidance to the EOC design.

Professional OES staff, staff from the General Services Facilities Services Division, architects and engineers from the Austin Company, visited multiple counties throughout southern California to learn more of those counties EOC experiences. Robust information was obtained from their visits and incorporated into the current design; especially the need to have an EOC that allowed for future expansion as every county visited reported they had outgrown their current EOC.

³ <http://www.countyofsb.org/ceo/budgetresearch/documents/cip2009/07-2%20General%20Services.pdf>
(Page B-201)

⁴ <http://www.countyofsb.org/ceo/budgetresearch/documents/cip2009/07-2%20General%20Services.pdf>
(Page B-199)

Issues to be Considered for a New EOC

The Grand Jury correctly speaks to the need for a dedicated EOC by dismissing the notion that emergency management can take place through remote communication systems such as video conferencing and conference calls. While the Grand Jury recognizes the coordination efforts with departments such as the Sheriff's Department and the Fire Department, significant coordination also takes place with other governmental jurisdictions (cities, schools and special districts) as well as multiple County departments(Flood Control, Public Health, Animal Services, Social Services, etc.) Such span of management and coordination can only realistically take place in a fixed facility with adequate working space if an optimal emergency response of service to the operational area is to be achieved.

The Grand Jury also references a FEMA handbook regarding EOC standards⁵. Staff agrees with the Grand Jury's statement, *"It (the EOC) should be close to the heart of government offices, be located away from fault lines, be located in a building meeting stringent seismic structural codes, not be located in a flood zone, and be distant from hazardous materials storage facilities, nuclear plants or toxic waste transportation routes. It should be centrally located, with good road access. The existing EOC does not meet these standards."*

Finding 1: *"The Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center is housed in temporary modular buildings which are unlikely to be usable following an earthquake."*

Response: Agree.

Recommendation 1: *"That the Board of Supervisors direct that the County research other sites to create a dedicated interim Emergency Operations Center. The sites considered must be measured against the existing Emergency Operations Center in terms of size and seismic safety."*

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

Staff respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury. Funding for the EOC has been set aside in the County's Capital Project designation. Funds needed to conduct additional site studies (beyond those already performed) would only reduce the limited available EOC funding and delay the ultimate goal of a permanent dedicated facility. Placing a critical public safety resource in a rented facility subjects the County to obvious rental issues. Finally, finding a facility that truly meets the needs of an EOC, including such standards as "essential building

⁵ FEMA Publication CPG 1-20 <http://www.all-hazards.com/LGP/library/CPG1-20/120CH3.pdf>

construction” would be a difficult and expensive process; again further depleting available EOC funds.

Staff believes that spending significant amounts of limited EOC capital project funds for yet another interim (essentially an interim for the existing interim) is not prudent as it again further delays the building of a dedicated facility.

Finding 2: “The County Office of Emergency Services has not included the Fire or Sheriff’s Departments as an integral part in planning for a new Emergency Operations Center.”

Response: Disagree. Staff respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury.

On April 15, 2009 (before the issuance of the Grand Jury Report) the General Services Department, Facilities Services, issued a compact disk with design drawings and specifications to numerous county departments and staff – including Sheriff and Fire Departments – requesting their input. The basic design utilized the expertise of OES staff with decades of experience in emergency management and have functioned in several EOCs during emergencies and the contracted Architect/Engineering firm who has many years experience in EOC construction.

It should be noted that for many years the interim EOC was a multipurpose room in the basement of the Sheriff’s Department jail. Both the Sheriff’s Department and Fire Department have assisted, along with several other departments, in staffing that facility and the current interim facility. Those departments are fully aware of the current limitations and need of a real facility.

Recommendation 2: “That the Office of Emergency Services include staff from other departments, specifically the Fire and Sheriff’s Departments, in planning the Emergency Operations Center.”

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

In addition to Finding 2, above, during the final phases of EOC design the General Services Department, Capital Projects, will receive any final comments from several County departments who routinely operate in the EOC during emergency operations.

Finding 3: “The Austin Company recommended a permanent, dedicated Emergency Operations Center with 12,740 square feet, and then reduced it to 9,300 square feet for “budgetary reasons”. The existing Emergency

Operations Center is approximately 3,670 square feet. Nowhere is it explained why two and a half times as much space is required.”

Response: Staff respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury that the space needs have not been explained.

The need for the space as designed has been demonstrated in detail in successively detailed plans with specific information provided by the Austin Company and explained to the Board of Supervisors. The current interim EOC lacks space to provide necessary services and infrastructure that are normally associated with an EOC. Comparing a classroom that serves as the current interim EOC which has no real facilities for emergency services, with a permanent facility that has the EOC space is confusing. The differences include (square footage reflected below does not include hallways and minor storage):

- Offices for OES staff to assist with rapid EOC mobilization (1,153 sq. ft.). Currently OES staff are located remotely which means that staff must travel to the interim EOC before they can begin to change the classroom setting into the interim EOC.
- A room containing emergency power source to operate systems until a generator turns on (468 sq. ft.). The current EOC has no such buffer to the generator or its normal electrical supply. This results in power spikes that cause electrical systems to shut down.
- A room for computer systems that can assist the EOC in maintaining emergency computer systems when other County computer systems are “off-line” (510 sq. ft.). The current interim EOC has no on-site computer systems. All systems work of the County computer network housed in a separate location and therefore subjects the interim EOC to a significant vulnerability.
- The proposed EOC has separate conference rooms and work areas to assist staff in working during emergencies (2,183 sq. ft.). The proposed work spaces include areas for a joint information center (JIC). The development and use of a JIC was supported a recent Grand Jury report regarding emergency communications. The rooms also accommodate mapping staff and a radio/television room for communications staff. The current interim EOC has no separate areas to work; staff must use tables in the middle of the incident room. Feedback from EOC staff repeatedly mentions noise as an interfering aspect of the current facility.
- A modest kitchen and bathrooms with shower facilities are proposed (940 sq. ft.). The current interim EOC has neither. Emergency management staff routinely spend 16 hours or more at the EOC during activation. The current facility has no showers or food facilities. Current lack of refrigeration at the interim EOC also poses a health risk.
- An expansion of the current operations room to approximately 2,025 sq. ft. to better accommodate the staff located in the EOC during operations.

Recommendation 3: “That the Director of the Office of Emergency Services develop the space requirements for an interim Emergency Operations Center, recognizing that existing buildings might be less than 9,270 square feet.”

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable and the costs will undermine the established policy to build a permanent EOC.

Professional emergency management staff and the contracted architect/engineering firm have spent significant time evaluating EOCs in the Southern California area. The current plans for a new Santa Barbara County EOC are the minimal size recommended for such a permanent facility when the supporting rooms articulated in Finding 3 above are considered. The Grand Jury’s premise that a new facility, even if it is smaller than recommended, or in a location such as the Administration Building basement, is better than what exists is true in the sense that the current interim facility is in modular buildings but is still not an optimum or long range solution. Modifying a facility, such as the County Administration basement, to make an EOC fit will result in designated funds being spent on another inadequate facility. More over, some services now in that location will have to be relocated to unknown locations; also costing the County immediately and long-term. The Grand Jury estimates that 5,000 to 6,000 square feet would be available if the mailroom, reprographics and the current OES offices were renovated. The Grand Jury incorrectly asserts that, because the square footage is larger, and in a building that was seismically retrofitted in 1982, an EOC in the basement of a four story building could fulfill the Op Area need. Even if the building should survive, impacts such as broken water and sewage lines place the functionality of the EOC at risk.

Finding 4: The Ventura and San Luis Obispo County Emergency Operations Centers are dedicated and up and running. Santa Barbara County officials have not made a site visit with either of them.

Response: Disagree. Staff respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury.

OES staff have visited both sites. Tenured OES staff have been to both facilities several times. The Emergency Operations Chief participated at the San Luis Obispo EOC in October 2008 for an extensive nuclear power plant drill. As discussed previously, an expert team of OES staff, General Services, Facilities staff and contracted architects & engineers with EOC construction experience visited several southern California EOCs.

Recommendation 4: That County officials schedule an appointment to conduct a site visit of the Ventura and San Luis Obispo Emergency Operations Centers.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

Staff respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury's statement that, "Santa Barbara County officials have not made a site visit with either of them (Ventura or San Luis Obispo EOCs)."

Finding 5: The Office of Emergency Services Director is evaluating the purchase of Web EOC to allow Santa Barbara County to develop a Virtual EOC. The cost has been estimated at \$68,000, which might be paid for by Homeland Security funds.

Response: Staff agrees with the Grand Jury.

Recommendation 5: That the Board of Supervisors authorize funds for the purchase of Web EOC.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not warranted.

The OES has requested funding for emergency management software, e.g. WebEOC®, from Homeland Security funds. The request has been tentatively approved and is pending final authorization. The amount quoted by the Grand Jury in recommendation 5 (\$68,000) is based on a web-based service. The funds being requested by Homeland Security includes locally hosted servers with the web-based service serving as a back-up system and an update to the EOCs existing computer system to reduce the time it currently takes to activate the EOC.

While the Grand Jury focused on the software side, OES has been working with the County's IT Department to improve the systems used within the EOC. Through the emergencies that have been handled, one area identified has been the difficulties of establishing a computer system in the EOC. To address the system the Homeland Security project will include software available to all Op Area entities, thus improving Op Area incident communications. When funding approval is received, the matter will be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

Attachment 2