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May 18, 2011

✓ The Honorable Joni Gray, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
County Administration Building
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Honorable Joni Gray:

The 2010-11 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury recently released its report entitled *Improving Our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century*. The City of Santa Maria is named as an affected agency and is required to respond to applicable findings and recommendations within 90 days of the report issuance.

RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY FINDING REGARDING *IMPROVING OUR EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM IN THE 21ST CENTURY*

Finding 2: During past crises, emergency agencies have not always communicated with each other which may have slowed information being passed to affected residents.

City Response: The City agrees with the finding.

Finding 3: No single public emergency services agency has accepted the responsibility for educating the public about the actions the public must take to access emergency service communications or what information the public can expect from various emergency alert/information systems.

City Response: The City partially agrees with the Grand Jury finding, since we are not afforded how information has been disseminated in other cities during such emergency events. The County Office of Emergency Services should take on this role during a multi-jurisdictional emergency; in fact, it is tasked with the coordination and management of interoperable communication under Standard Emergency Management Systems guidelines. However, the City of Santa Maria makes a special effort to educate the public and the media about accessing emergency service communications and what information they can expect to receive, through a multi-faceted approach.

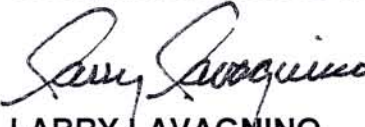
Recommendation 2: The Board of Supervisors and appropriate City jurisdictions require their respective emergency agencies to pass emergency information to adjacent jurisdictions and the Office of Emergency Services without delay.

City Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The City of Santa Maria, as are all seven other local cities and the County of Santa Barbara, are cooperatively working to update their respective Hazard Mitigation Plans this calendar year. One outcome will be the sharing of emergency information among agencies. Further, the City is participating in the Countywide use of the WebEOC® emergency management communication software training that the County Office of Emergency Services introduced this year, to post emergency information via a secure network among local City jurisdictions and the Office of Emergency Services.

It should be noted that City staff is somewhat disappointed that no-one from the Grand Jury contacted the City about its substantial efforts to educate its residents about emergency communications. Also, it is important to note that the County's Reverse 9-1-1 System does not include Santa Maria.

The City is excited about its robust and free Community Alert Notification System, which has been in place since March, 2008. The City actively encourages residents to register for this bilingual system, which it promotes through multiple outreach events, its website, the Recreation Guide, monthly e-mail newsletters, and in many media interviews. More than 45,000 contacts are now enrolled. The system automatically registers all local Verizon landlines and allows five contacts per resident in the form of landline phone(s), cell phone(s) and e-mail, and can send 50,000 calls in an hour. The system also includes a contact group for the media.

The above concludes the City's response to the Grand Jury's Report on *Improving Our Emergency Alert System in the 21st Century*. The City of Santa Maria respectfully submits this response to the Grand Jury and thanks you again for all your efforts associated with this 2010-11 Grand Jury Report.


LARRY LAVAGNINO
Mayor


TIM NESS
City Manager