

HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency Services County & Cities Of Solano 2003-2004 Grand Jury Report

I. Reason For Investigation

This year's Grand Jury elected to review the Emergency Operating Centers and Procedures of agencies within Solano County and how Homeland Security mandates have been incorporated into Emergency Operating Plans.

II. Procedure

The Grand Jury:

- Reviewed all information from the 2002-2003 Solano County Grand Jury Final Report
- Interviewed Solano County Administrator, Emergency Services Manager and Emergency Medical Services Administrator
- Interviewed the City of Benicia City Manager and Police Chief
- Interviewed the City of Dixon City Manager and Police Chief
- Interviewed the City of Fairfield City Manager, Police Chief, Police Lieutenant and Fire Chief
- Interviewed the City of Rio Vista Acting City Manager/Fire Chief
- Interviewed the City of Suisun City Police Chief
- Interviewed the City of Vacaville City Manager and Police Chief
- Interviewed the City of Vallejo City Manager, Police Chief and Fire Chief
- Interviewed personnel of certain Federal and State agencies with an interface with Solano County and Solano County cities
- Interviewed personnel of certain private companies that have a security interface with Solano County and Solano County cities
- Attended and observed Solano County Multi-Agency Disaster Drill – November 12, 2003

III. Background

1. As set by State law, each City, Special District and County is required to develop an Emergency Operating Plan. To standardize the plan, United States Code (USC) §8607 requires all agencies to operate under the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).

2. Each city is generally the first responder to disaster, terrorism, search and rescue, floods and other major emergencies within its jurisdiction. The City Manager, or his/her designee, has authority over the incident and determines what response is necessary to secure the safety of that community.

3. If the incident authority determines that the situation is beyond the capabilities of his/her city, mutual aid is requested of other cities and the County.

4. If the incident should encompass a large portion of the county as reported by the first responder, the County Emergency Operation Center (EOC) is activated by the Emergency Services Manager who assumes management and coordination of the incident. This includes equipment, materials, supplies and personnel.

5. Solano County is responsible for the coordination of medical services and response, multi-agency drills and training.

6. Homeland security has been added to the responsibilities of each city and the County. Working with units within the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, each agency is incorporating the many mandates that are being passed down to be included into current operating procedures and emergency response. This also includes working with the private sector (e.g. ports, chemical facilities, etc.).

7. Although Travis Air Force Base (TAFB) is responsible to the United States Government, Solano County and cities include TAFB in their emergency planning and exercises. It is understood that the County and cities have no authority over the base in the event of an emergency, but TAFB does have the ability to provide some response when authorized to proceed by the appropriate Federal Department. TAFB does have a program called U.S. Air Force Eagle Eyes that uses local residents on the anti-terrorism team by providing the information needed to recognize and report suspicious behavior.

IV. Findings And Recommendations

Each finding is referenced to the background reference number

Finding #1 – There is an Emergency Operating Plan for the County and each city. However, the plans vary and there seems to be no consistency among the county and cities regarding the training relating to Emergency Operating Procedures and new mandates from U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (1)(2)(6)

Recommendation #1 – To ensure that each agency is in compliance with California and U.S. emergency requirements, one agency should take the lead to insure that the appropriate training, exercises and guidelines are established and implemented. Due to the fact that the County has a dedicated employee for Emergency Services, it is logical that the County Office of Emergency Services take the lead in this endeavor. Currently, agencies meet to discuss response and mutual aid. It is recommended that the review of agency operational plans and procedures be presented at these meetings to ensure each agency is within State and U.S. standards.

Finding #2 - Within some agencies, there seems to be confusion about who would activate the EOC and who has authority to make appropriate and crucial decisions relating to the necessary response, material, supplies and the request for mutual aid. (2)

Recommendation #2 – The County Administrator (CAO) and each City Manager should review and define their respective emergency administrative roles and clearly communicate these responsibilities to members of the EOC team.

Finding #3 - If an emergency incident should escalate beyond the agency's capacity and the need to request mutual aid from another agency should be necessary, the current communication systems would hamper responsibilities, as each agency's communication system operates independently with no coordination and little interoperability among police, fire and medical agencies. This finding was part of the 2002-2003 Solano County Grand Jury Report. It appears that no progress has taken place to rectify this problem. (3)(4)

Recommendation #3 – The U. S. Department of Homeland Security has made it clear that funding is available for a variety of needs at the local level, but the process to determine those needs is slow and difficult. As a temporary solution to the County-wide communication system, the county estimates that \$3,000,000 would provide a system that would link agencies appropriately when significant multi-response is required. Rather than each city or the county pursuing the available funds, all agencies should jointly ascertain what U. S. Department of Homeland Security is requiring and whether those needs can be met for this project. With the County Office of Emergency Services acting as the lead agency, they could develop a grant application that represents all of the agencies in Solano County.

Finding #4 - Dixon, Rio Vista and Benicia do not have hospital facilities and those that exist in Solano County have inadequate beds to accommodate a major incident. There is no trauma center or decontamination facility in the entire County. A system called Reddinet links all medical facilities in the County with the County EOC, and provides an instant count of available beds and facilities. Currently, medical facilities located in Solano County depend on trauma centers located in Contra Costa and Napa Counties. In a major event, most likely, these facilities would not be available. The escalating growth of Solano County necessitates the exploration of facilities to provide for the safety of its residents. (5)

Recommendation #4 – The Solano County Board of Supervisors review this issue and make it part of Solano County’s future planning goals no later than 2005-2006. Solano County funding should include continuance of the Reddinet service.

Finding #5 – There is no certified Hazardous Material (HazMat) Response Team in the County. Although fire and police personnel are trained to make a first on-site assessment, actual cleanup must be performed by qualified personnel. Currently the services of Napa County and the City of Sacramento are being used, but in the case of a major event, those services may not be available. It is realized that the cost to establish a HazMat Team is large (\$2,000,000 plus), and the annual operating cost is estimated at \$350,000. But a joint effort by all the cities, districts and County may make this affordable. (4)

Recommendation #5 – The County Office of Emergency Services take the lead in a study to determine the feasibility of establishing a County HazMat Team.

Finding #6 - A County Mobile Command Center has been acquired by a grant approved through U.S. Department of Homeland Security. This unit can be moved to an incident and become the Command Center for the responsible agency. It provides the capability to develop one communication frequency so all responding agencies have the capability of communicating and is equipped with backup power. (4)

Recommendation #6 - Solano County ensure that training in the mobile command center be required for all emergency command personnel within the County. The County is to be commended for acquiring this state-of-the-art unit.

Finding #7 - Some of the agencies do not have dedicated space for a local EOC. In some cases the area is being used for other purposes and must be transformed in an emergency, which may in turn, hamper the response time. (1)

Recommendation #7 - Every effort should be made to provide dedicated space for an EOC. If space is unavailable, a dedicated area should consist of all necessary equipment and supplies to transform the area as soon as possible. Each local EOC needs to have back up power.

Finding #8 - Solano County has an automatic phone warning system for the entire County. Residents of an affected area can be warned by an automatic phone call with recorded instructions as to the situation. Local radio stations and television are also used to inform the public. (4)

Recommendation #8 – Agencies which have this valuable service should publicize this to their citizens.

Finding #9 - Solano County Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for implementing State Medical Standards and Medical Response Procedures. However, it is unclear how the Department interacts with the Office of Emergency Services or its role in the EOC. (5)

Recommendation #9 - The Solano County Chief Administrative Officer should define the role during emergencies of the Department of Health and Social Services during an emergency, including placement in the Solano County Emergency Operations Organization Chart with assigned duties and responsibilities.

Finding #10 - A Solano County Multi-Agency Disaster Drill took place on November 13, 2003. The purpose was to test and train the appropriate personnel of law enforcement, fire service, emergency medical services, County Office of Emergency Services, Solano County Emergency Medical Services Agencies and the Public Health Department to respond to a terrorist event involving mass casualties and significant destruction or the potential thereof. This was the first such drill in Solano County. The drill revealed an overall lack of communication and leadership. Objectives of the drill were only partially achieved or not achieved at all. The results of this drill emphasize the need for a central authority to coordinate a disaster event that involves mutual aid. (5)

Recommendation #10 - The County Administrative Officer should take the lead and determine the necessary action to resolve the non-achieved objectives of this exercise.

Finding #11 - Agencies tend to be territorial and focus on their own needs when planning for community services which may create obstacles when trying to develop mutual aid throughout the County that will benefit all citizens in a time of crisis. The terrorist actions of September 11, 2001 created a need for reassessment of the procedures to safeguard our population. The formation of the U. S. Department of Homeland Security brought together 42 agencies under one department requiring a major coordination effort, not only with U. S. Department of Homeland Security but with states, counties and cities so that information and responses can occur both up and down the organizational chart. (6)

Recommendation #11 – Elected County officials, county administrators and City Managers need to reassess the methods by which Emergency Operating Systems are developed and implemented to break down territorial lines and to ensure that the emergency service needs are being met. Just as many Federal government departments were combined under U.S. Department of Homeland Security to establish the most efficient and effective way to respond to various incidents, so should state, counties and cities review existing emergency response structures. To make this happen, elected officials should take the initial step to form a County-wide committee that would include representatives from the State Senate and Assembly offices, County Board of Supervisors and City Councils. At this level, an assessment of County needs should take place and appropriate direction given to responsible County and City staff to develop a seamless Emergency Operating Plan throughout the County.

V. Comments

It is apparent that with the additional responsibilities of U.S. Department of Homeland Security being added to the county and cities, their Emergency Operation workload has increased. Some of those mandates require funding which has not made its way from the Federal Government, putting additional strain on local budgets and staff. If each agency works independently, the power of combined resources will be lost and their efforts hampered unnecessarily. There is no better time for all agencies to join their talents, experience and financial resources to provide the most efficient and effective emergency operational response for all the residents of Solano County.

VI. Affected Agencies

- Solano County Board of Supervisors
- Solano County Chief Administrative Officer
- Solano County Sheriff Department
- Solano County Emergency Services Manager
- Solano County Emergency Medical Services Administrator
- City of Benicia City Manager
- City of Benicia Police Chief
- City of Dixon
- City of Dixon City Manager
- City of Dixon Police Chief
- City of Fairfield City Manager
- City of Fairfield Police Chief
- City of Fairfield Fire Chief
- City of Suisun City
- City of Suisun City Police Chief
- City of Rio Vista
- City of Rio Vista City Manager
- City of Rio Vista Police Chief
- City of Vacaville
- City of Vacaville City Manager
- City of Vacaville Police Chief
- City of Vallejo
- City of Vallejo City Manager
- City of Vallejo Police Chief
- City of Vallejo Fire Chief

Courtesy Copies

- State Senator, 2nd District
- State Senator, 4th District
- State Assembly, 8th District
- State Assembly, 7th District