



SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2014 - 2015

SOLANO COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Solano County Office of Emergency Services

2014-2015 Solano County Grand Jury

I. SUMMARY

On September 10, 2014, the 2014-2015 Solano County Grand Jury elected to inquire of the Office of Emergency Services (OES), a Bureau of the Solano County Sheriff's Office. Subsequently the Grand Jury toured the OES offices and communications center. During the presentation about current OES facilities, and the organizational structure of the OES, the Grand Jury found the OES to be very efficient, very well managed and poised to handle emergencies in Solano County. At that time the Solano County OES was also engaged in assisting Napa County after the recent earthquake in Northern California.

II. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Function of OES

As stated in the Office of Emergency Services (OES) website: OES manages and coordinates disasters, terrorism, search and rescue missions, floods, and other major emergencies within the Operational Areas, assists city and county departments with fire suppression activities, evacuations, hazardous materials incidents, disaster exercises, planning, and utilization of resources through the SEMS/Incident Command System. In addition, the Department manages the Operational Area emergency management program and all Emergency Operations Center (EOC) functions for Solano County. Communicate with and provide information as the primary reporting agency to the State Office of Emergency Services during disasters and emergencies. Coordinates all State and Federal assistance needed by cities and the County. This is only a partial list of the functions of the County OES.

The Mission statement and responsibilities of the OES of Solano County are included here as part of this Grand Jury report.

The Solano County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is dedicated to the development, establishment, and maintenance of programs and procedures which will provide for the protection of lives and property of Solano County residents from the effects of natural or man-made disasters. Natural or man-made disasters to which the county is subject and for which the office must train and properly respond include: floods, earthquakes, major fires, storms, radiological or hazardous material incidents, aircraft accidents, mass casualty incidents and any emergency related function that supports the Sheriff's office.

Search And Rescue (SAR) is a division of OES. As the name implies, the SAR functions in the search for lost or missing persons and provides rescue service where needed. SAR is available to all agencies in Solano County on a request basis.

III. METHODOLOGY

Interviewed:

- Various members of OES management.
- Staff of the OES Command Center
- Staff of the dispatch center.

Reviewed:

- Office of Emergency Services website

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

Of primary concern to the OES is the communication system which experiences multiple areas of “dead radio reception” due to radio signal interference caused by the terrain, particularly in canyons and ravines, on waterways, etc. The remedy for this problem requires repeater stations and suitable appropriate frequencies. Some of these problems were being addressed at the time of the tour, but lack of adequate funding slows the completion of coverage for the entire county.

Another concern is the present location of the offices of OES Command Center and communications center, which, according to the OES staff, are located in a severe flood zone.

Still another concern is the frailty of the present building that houses the OES, equipment and staff. Recent seismic activities have resulted in damages demonstrating the lack of stability in the building.

A county owned site near the Clay Bank and Stanton detention facilities was identified as a potential location for new housing of the OES and the communications center of the Sheriff’s Office. The communications center handles dispatch for the Sheriff’s Office, and also dispatches for the independent fire districts in Solano County.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1

Communication coverage is critical for rapid response and management of emergency services.

Recommendation 1

County work with the agencies affected by communication dead zones to create solutions and to secure adequate funding for repeater towers, frequencies and associated equipment as a high priority item.

Finding 2

The Office of Emergency Services headquarters and the communication center are housed in a facility located in seismic and flood zones.

Recommendation 2

Solano County Board of Supervisors approve and secure funding for the construction of a new facility to house the Office of Emergency Services and the Solano County communications center.

Comments

The recent Napa County earthquake disaster is evidence of the possibility of extensive damages locally and the need for rapid emergency services. The personnel in the OES are well trained and capable of accomplishing their assigned duties. They need safe facilities and reliable communications equipment to accomplish their mission successfully.

Required Responses

Solano County Sheriff's Office (Findings 1, 2)
Solano County Board of Supervisors (Finding 2)

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Clerk, Solano County Board of Supervisors