



LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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SEP 19 2016

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Brian L. Martin
Sheriff/Coroner

August 21, 2016

Honorable Andrew Blum
Presiding Judge
Lake County Superior Courts
255 N. Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

To the Honorable Judge Blum,

I am writing this letter in accordance with Penal Code Section 933.05 as response to the June 30, 2016 final report from the Lake County Civil Grand Jury. I first want to thank the Court and express my gratitude and appreciation for the volunteers who dedicated many hours by providing this important service to our community. I welcome the opportunity to have oversight and feedback regarding the Sheriff's Office's operations, and I constantly strive to improve the professional services provided by this agency to the people in Lake County.

The Grand Jury's Final Report included a chapter on the role of the Office of Emergency Services and county disaster preparedness. The Grand Jury's report found that the coordination of emergency services in the midst of one of the largest disasters to hit California was "disorganized." The investigation report recognized that the Office of Emergency Services' functions had moved from the Public Services Department, to the Sheriff's Department, to the County Administrative Office, and back to the Sheriff's Department by the time of publishing of the report.

In response to the report, I wholeheartedly agree that emergency service responses during the Rocky, Jerusalem, and Valley Fires of 2015 were disorganized despite the dedication of other County leaders who stepped up during these events. The County, in cooperation with my Office, amended the County's ordinance appointing the Lake County Sheriff as the Director of Emergency Services in Lake County. After extensive recruitment efforts were made, we were able to hire a new Emergency Services Manager (ESM) at the end of April, 2016. This Emergency Services Manager comes with many years of experience in emergency response,

and has been diligently working to ensure that the Lake County Office of Emergency Services is prepared to respond to the next disaster. Included in those many tasks are establishing, furnishing, and equipping a County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to be housed at the Alternative Work Program building adjacent to the Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center.

In order to effectively meet the needs of our communities in responding to disasters, it is critical to have more than one employee assigned to fill these roles. Despite the County's financial difficulties, the LCSO/OES has received a commitment to fund an Emergency Services Assistant position to help the ESM with disaster preparedness.

Lake County's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is 2 decades old. Many of the rules, regulations, and laws that guide its structure have changed over the years. This requires a complete overhaul of the EOP, which the ESM has been working on.

Many of the findings that were addressed in the Grand Jury's report have been, or are in the process of being rectified. We have provided training to identify responder's roles in the operation of the EOC. We have identified key County leaders and assigned them roles in the EOC in the various branches. We have ensured that public employees complete required training in the Incident Command System. We are in the process of revamping the County's EOP. We have identified the roles and responsibilities of the various cooperators and stakeholders in the EOC.

The County's decision to appoint the Sheriff as the Director of Emergency Services and place the Office of Emergency Services under the direction of the Sheriff's Office has already proven to be a good decision. As I write this response, Lake County is in the beginning stages of the recovery process of our most serious fire of the 2016 fire season. The Clayton Fire, which started on August 13th, claimed several hundred structures including approximately 200 residences. The fire burned nearly 4000 acres and required the evacuation of the communities of Lower Lake, and a part of the Incorporated City of Clearlake east of Highway 53. During our response to this emergency, we already saw improvements due to lessons we learned in 2015, and changes that have been made. We were able to safely and efficiently evacuate an estimated 4000 residents. For those who were fortunate enough to have their homes spared, we were able to return them home in six days. During our response, we had no reported civilian injuries or fatalities. Our communication, cooperation and coordination with CalFire and our communities was greatly improved when compared with the 2015 season.

I would be remiss in my response if I did not recognize the efforts of the newly appointed Lake County Administrative Officer, Carol Huchingson. The CAO had a large role during the 2015 fire season, acting as the EOC Manager following the departure of the previous Emergency Services Manager. The CAO also filled the role of the recovery court later. Her experience and understanding in those positions gave her a greater understanding of the importance of the role of emergency services. The CAO has been very supportive, and continues to be so, in assisting the Sheriff's Department to fulfill its obligations in disaster preparedness preparation.

In the Public Safety section of the Grand Jury report, one of the recommendations was that the Sheriff's Office work with CalFire to make County inmates who qualify, available to transfer to the Conservation Camp Fire Protection program. The Sheriff's Office has had discussions with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation about assigning County inmates to the Conservation Camp. So far, we have not been able to identify any inmates who would be eligible or suitable for such transfer. Much like the state prison inmates, our local County inmates are becoming less suitable for such programs.

Another recommendation under the Public Safety chapter was that the County should pursue more options for warning systems such as sirens and IPAWS. IPAWS is the Integrated Public Alert Warning System which issues emergency alerts via cell phone, the Emergency Broadcast System, and the Emergency Alert System. As of the writing of this report, the Lake County Sheriff's Office, through a generous donation by the Lake Area Rotary Club Association (LARCA), has secured software and a contract to provide IPAWS alerts within Lake County. LARCA has agreed to fund an additional two years of IPAWS contract costs at approximately \$10,000 per year.

Working with CalFire, we have obtained cost estimates for implementing siren warning systems in the South County area that was affected by the Valley Fire. The cost for such systems, just in this area, is estimated to be over \$180,000. Installing siren systems that would effectively cover all populated areas of Lake County would cost much more money. We are taking steps to try to identify funding sources for such a project. As of the writing of this response, adequate funding sources have not yet been identified.

In closing, I again want to express my appreciation to the members of the Lake County Civil Grand Jury for the many hours they spent serving our community. I am hopeful that they find some of our activities and improvements that have been made over the course of the year already address recommendations they have made. My Office, and the dedicated public servants who work here, will continue to strive to provide the very best services possible to residents and visitors in Lake County.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian L. Martin
Sheriff-Coroner
Emergency Services Director
County of Lake