



County of Santa Cruz

Civil Grand Jury
701 Ocean Street, Room 318-I
Santa Cruz, Ca 95060
(831) 454-2099

Dec 16, 2020

The Santa Cruz City Manager called the Grand Jury office on the above date to confirm that the Santa Cruz City Council approved its response to the *Ready? Aim? Fire!* report on 9/23/2020.

The Correspondence Committee on behalf of

Richard H. Goldberg

Richard H. Goldberg, Foreperson
2020–2021 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury



Santa Cruz County
Civil Grand Jury

Grand Jury <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

Santa Cruz City Council Response Packets for "Fire Inspections in Santa Cruz County" and "Ready Aim Fire"

1 message

Ralph Dimarucut <rdimarucut@cityofsantacruz.com>
To: "grandjury@scgrandjury.org" <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>
Cc: Suzanne Haberman <shaberman@cityofsantacruz.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 3:58 PM

Hello,

Attached please find the Santa Cruz City Council Response Packets for "Fire and Safety Inspections in Santa Cruz County" and "Ready, Aim, Fire."

Thank you,


Ralph Dimarucut

Principal Management Analyst
City Managers Office

City of Santa Cruz

831.420.5017

2 attachments

 **Fire and Safety Inspections in Santa Cruz County - City Council of Santa Cruz - Response Packet (002).pdf**
241K

 **Ready Aim Fire - City Council of Santa Cruz - Response Packet (003).pdf**
250K



**The 2019–2020 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury
Requires that the
City of Santa Cruz City Council
Respond to the Findings and Recommendations
Specified in the Report Titled
Ready? Aim? Fire!
Santa Cruz County on the Hot Seat
by October 1, 2020**

Findings

- F2.** Santa Cruz County residents are at increased risk of fire danger due to the lack of risk management for wildfire. Specific risks are not formally identified, tracked, assessed for impact, nor is progress reported by fire departments in the County. Therefore, leaders responsible for budgets and accountability are left unprepared to manage risk, impact, or performance.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

F4. Most of Santa Cruz County, in addition to the City of Santa Cruz with its large eucalyptus groves, are not being monitored by the ALERTWildfire Imaging Surveillance System and would be well served by the installation of cameras capable of monitoring coastal areas occupied by eucalyptus groves in areas harboring potential sources of ignition.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The City of Santa Cruz Fire Departments agrees that a more robust coverage area for the ALERTWildfire Imaging Surveillance system would be beneficial. However the focus should not be relegated to eucalyptus groves as they are just one component within the overall wildland fire risk. Wildland risk is present wherever there is flammable vegetation and the installation of ALERTWildfire Imaging Surveillance system camera would be best suited for overall area surveillance, not just a particular species of tree or a specific area.

- F11.** There are only approximately 17,000 accounts for the Santa Cruz County opt-in CodeRED™ emergency system, which implies that a significant portion of the County may not receive emergency alert messages, which potentially reduces residents' opportunity to take action in a timely, life-saving manner.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

CodeRed is the latest version of a “reverse 9-1-1” system that has been used in the County. As these systems have been changed over the years due to technology becoming obsolete or needing to be upgraded the historical subscriber data has not followed with the upgrade. In the past 10 years a significant number of callers to 9-1-1 are via cell phone and not landlines. Cellular providers will not share their customer's data so the number of registered users is dependent on self-registration, unlike land line data which is purchased from AT&T.

The number of “17,000 accounts” does not take into account the landlines, VOIP, and other cellular accounts which is more than 150,000 accounts. Furthermore SCR 9-1-1 is a licensed FCC user for Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) which can be used in an “imminent threat to life” situation. These alerts do not require registration and when issued will capture nearly 100% of the smart phones in the defined geographical area.

F20. The FireWise institution provides a valuable fire prevention program and, as of March 2020, there were eight FireWise communities registered in the County. Marin County, by contrast, with a similar population, has sixty registered communities, highlighting the need for more FireWise promotion and participation in Santa Cruz County.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The Santa Cruz City Fire Department helped create the first FireWise community (Prospect Heights) in Santa Cruz County. Since then it has helped with the formation of two additional FireWise communities (Highland and Western) with additional outreach and education being done.

F22. Property owners in the County are responsible for their own vegetation management, yet they are often not sufficiently educated about vegetation management practices, or do not have the capability, financial resources, or desire to create defensible space.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

There are myriad of resources easily available to educate property owners about vegetation management. Specific instances of property owner capability, financial resources, or desire in the County is beyond the scope of the City Fire Department.

F23. No single organization in the County is assuming a leadership role in Fire Hazard Mitigation. It is not clear whose responsibility it is to minimize this countywide risk.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The County of Santa Cruz is responsible for assuming a leadership role for mitigating hazards in the County.

F27. The 2015 County of Santa Cruz Emergency Operations Management Plan does not adequately address evacuation and references data too outdated to be useful, such as a population density map from the 2000 census.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The City of Santa Cruz Fire Department has specific evacuation and references for neighborhoods that are within our Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. There are shared plans for the County that are accessible for all fire agencies. There are currently plans with the Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association to refine these plans using current data and technology.

F29. The Grand Jury finds that formally specified baseline and target performance statements, in alignment with the Center for Public Safety Excellence Assessment Process, neither currently exist nor are they reported by fire departments in the County as required by best practice standards. There are no goals set or measures made of progress for review by the Board of Supervisors regarding County Fire/CAL FIRE performance. Other fire districts in the County are similarly remiss in reporting to their governing bodies. Appropriate goals would include progress on response times, vegetation management, and code inspection progress, all of which are necessary to properly quantify the budget and resources required for full-time, volunteer, and prison inmate workforces in appropriate, affordable proportions.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE – explain the disputed portion

DISAGREE – explain why

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Recommendations

R10. Santa Cruz County and Cities should create and/or update Hazard Mitigation Plans by July 1, 2021. Any new or existing plans should be updated a minimum of every three years. All plans should address wildfire risk, evacuation and shelter-in-place plans, emergency alerts, and vegetation management, and confirm compliance with California SB 821. (F1, F2, F10, F11, F14–F16, F29)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The 2018-2023 City of Santa Cruz “Local Hazard Mitigation” plan was updated and adopted by the Santa Cruz City Council on October 9th, 2018. A copy of the plan can be found here (<https://www.cityofsantacruz.com/home/showdocument?id=77162>). This plan addresses Wildland as well as other hazards such as floods, earthquakes, drought, coastal erosion, etc. This is a FEMA approved plan and per FEMA guideline these plans must be updated and approved on a 5 year cycle to maintain eligibility for FEMA reimbursement.

R12. The Santa Cruz County Office of Emergency Services should create and publish shelter in place plans, with the cooperation of all county fire protection districts and cities, and should inform citizens of safe building locations, and on what to expect and what to do in case of wildfire, by March 31, 2021. (F14)

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain scope and timeframe
(not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

To our knowledge the County is not undertaking a “shelter in place” program to identify all buildings that could be used in a wildland fire. If this is done the City Fire Department will share information and collaborate with the County to make this happen. The City has pre-designated buildings, and shelter sites, that dependent on the event would be used within the City.

R15. All fire districts in Santa Cruz County should coordinate with utility companies to provide information to residents, via information inserted in utility bill mailings, describing how to sign up for emergency notifications by December 31, 2020. (F19)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Including information in utility bills could be a means to increase enrolment in emergency notification for CodeRed. If the purpose is to increase enrollment it may be a more effective strategy to simply do a direct mailer versus including it in a utility bill. There a number of utilities that bill for their service (Gas, electrical, water, refuse) that cross fire district boundaries.

R19. The Board of Supervisors should require the CAO to appoint a County Risk Manager by December 31, 2020. The Risk Manager should report to the CAO, who will be responsible for ongoing identification, analysis, quantification, and remediation planning of all fire risks across the County. This role should be considered as a service to all four cities in the County as well. (F2, F3, F24)

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The City would support a Risk Manager being appointed within the County. However the City does not have direct control over this happening.