



Santa Cruz County  
Civil Grand Jury

Grand Jury <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

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## Ready? Aim? Fire!

1 message

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Volland, Theresa@CALFIRE <Theresa.Volland@fire.ca.gov>  
To: "grandjury@scgrandjury.org" <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

Wed, Sep 16, 2020 at 11:27 AM

Good morning,

Attached please find Aromas Tri County Fire Protection Districts responses to the Ready? Aim? Fire!

If you have any questions please let me know,

Thank you,

Theresa Volland

Staff Services Analyst

Local Government

**CAL FIRE**

San Benito-Monterey Unit

Special Districts

831 333-2645 – Office

831 383-9063 – Cell

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**Santa Cruz County Ready\_Aim\_Fire!.pdf**  
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**The 2019–2020 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury  
Requires that the**

**Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District  
Board of Directors**

**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**

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When the response is complete, please

1. Email the completed Response Packet as a file attachment to [grandjury@scgrandjury.org](mailto:grandjury@scgrandjury.org), and
2. Print and send a hard copy of the completed Response Packet to

The Honorable Judge John Gallagher  
Santa Cruz Courthouse  
701 Ocean St.  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

## Instructions for Respondents

California law PC §933.05 (included below) requires the respondent to a Grand Jury report to comment on each finding and recommendation within a report. Explanations for disagreements and timeframes for further implementation or analysis must be provided. Please follow the format below when preparing the responses.

### Response Format

1. For the Findings included in this Response Packet, select one of the following responses and provide the required additional information:
  - a. **AGREE** with the Finding, or
  - b. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE** with the Finding and specify the portion of the Finding that is disputed and include an explanation of the reasons therefor, or
  - c. **DISAGREE** with the Finding and provide an explanation of the reasons therefor.
  
2. For the Recommendations included in this Response Packet, select one of the following actions and provide the required additional information:
  - a. **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED**, with a summary regarding the implemented action, or
  - b. **HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**, with a timeframe or expected date for implementation, or
  - c. **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS**, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for that analysis or study; this timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report, or
  - d. **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

### Validation

Date of the Board's response approval: Sept 15, 2020

If you have questions about this response form, please contact the Grand Jury by calling 831-454-2099 or by sending an email to [grandjury@scgrandjury.org](mailto:grandjury@scgrandjury.org).

**Findings**

**F1.** Vegetation/fuel management and abatement are not receiving the attention nor funding needed from the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors, and therefore are not adhering to California Government Executive Order 1.8.19-EO-N-05-19.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

No vegetation/fuel management or abatement projects were identified within the boundaries the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District and County of Santa Cruz as per the Executive Order.

**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):**

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District manages wildfire risk through public education, Fire Safe Councils and locally focused programs such as the Aromas Chipper Program. Efforts outside District boundaries are not monitored by the Board. CAL FIRE Units issue yearly Unit Fire Plans and via this document track all identified wildfire risk management projects.

**F3.** City and County officials have not collaborated with PG&E to identify the location of high risk PG&E electrical equipment, and so are left uninformed as to how to manage their responsibilities or how to instruct residents about potential danger due to proximity to this equipment.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is aware of the location of PG&E electrical equipment within its jurisdiction. Efforts outside District boundaries are not monitored by the Board.

**F5.** Santa Cruz County would greatly benefit if steps were taken to implement the CAL FIRE, San Mateo - Santa Cruz Unit 2018 recommendation of developing detailed, site specific Community Wildfire Protection Plans for communities throughout the County.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is supportive of efforts to protect communities from the threat of wildfire; however the Board cannot make recommendations for communities outside its jurisdictional boundaries.

**F6.** Response time data for fire departments in Santa Cruz County is challenging to obtain. Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 previously reported response time data in their annual reports, but did not do so in the 2018 or 2019 annual reports.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District has not attempted to acquire response times from Santa Cruz County and as such has not experienced any challenges.



**F10.** Roadside vegetation in rural areas of the County is not being cleared consistently which could potentially increase emergency response time, putting life and property in unnecessary danger. Furthermore, evacuations could be restricted as there is no rule or program that mandates that roads, even critical evacuation routes, be kept cleared meeting defensible space requirements.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District does not monitor roadside vegetation outside the boundaries of its District.

**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):**

Emergency alert messaging is under the purview of the local law enforcement agency (police or sheriff) or emergency management agency (city or county OES). As such the Aromas Tri-County Fire District is not privy to the quoted statistics. The District provides internet links for sign-up to the Emergency Alert programs for all three of the Counties it serves. It is notable that Code-Red is not the only method for communities to receive emergency notifications.

**F12.** Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRADs), have been deployed in other areas of the state and have proven effective tools in alerting residents in urban and rural areas to a wildfire. However, Santa Cruz County has no such devices, increasing the risk to County residents.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

Emergency evacuation messaging and delivery is under the purview of the local law enforcement agency (police or sheriff) and/or emergency management agency (city or county OES). As such, the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is not privy to local efforts.

The use of LRADS is not something our staff is aware of, but they have initial concerns about the noise affecting fire-ground face-face communications.

**F13.** High risk communities in the County are left unnecessarily vulnerable due to the lack of easily accessible, published information of refuge/assembly areas and structures.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is not in a position to judge High Risk communities outside its jurisdiction.

**F14.** Because the County does not publish a “shelter in place” plan, when a fire expands rapidly, residents cannot make informed decisions about whether to shelter in place or evacuate.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District defers to the local emergency management agency (police, sheriff, or OES) for information regarding evacuation warnings or orders. We encourage all individuals to follow those instructions when they are provided.

**F15.** Unlike the City of Santa Cruz, the County does not publish emergency evacuation routes, purportedly to avoid having old or untimely information being followed in an emergency. The County therefore withholds revealing evacuation routes until an emergency is in progress, likely creating unnecessary risk and potential for chaos.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District does not monitor what the City of Santa Cruz publishes and defers to the local emergency management agency (police, sheriff, or OES) for their expertise on the release of evacuation route information.

**F16.** In the Wildland Urban Interface zone, and in many town centers, traffic choke points exist, and in some instances have roadway obstacles to traffic flow such as overgrown vegetation, concrete medians, curbs, and lane reductions resulting in roads that are inadequate for mass evacuations.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire District has few, if any obstacles as described within its jurisdictional boundaries.

**F19.** Wildfire preparedness informational materials are well done and public education is attempted by fire departments in the County, but fails to sufficiently reach and motivate residents to act.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is not in a position to judge educational efforts and successes outside its jurisdictional boundaries.



**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 Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is supportive of all fire prevention efforts; however when gauging community participation of programs such as FireWise, it is important to also look at the geographic size of each participating community and not just number of participating communities.

**F21.** The County Office of Emergency Services and fire agencies in the County encourage residents to be prepared for an emergency, however the passive mechanisms such as web sites used to encourage preparedness are not proving to be sufficient.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is not able to judge the sufficiency of the above stated efforts. However, locally the District has a robust and well visited website.

**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):**

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District is not in a position to judge educational efforts and successes outside its jurisdictional boundaries. The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District has an active Chipper Program and other community based vegetation management educational programs. We encourage all property owners and tenants to visit [ReadyforWildfire.org](http://ReadyforWildfire.org) for additional wildfire preparedness and defensible space information.

**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 County wide risk.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District, along with CAL FIRE, have taken a leadership role within its District boundaries for Fire Hazard Mitigation.

**F24.** The annual report to the County Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Office by County Fire/CAL FIRE does not provide data or analysis of resources, response times, code enforcement, inspection, or education. This information is necessary to show what gaps exist between current performance and community needs in order for informed budget decisions to be made. Without adequate background information, the Board of Supervisors is unable to hold CAL FIRE accountable for the specific responsibilities specified in their contract.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District does not monitor the above noted annual report to the County.

**F26.** Reporting data, statistics, and formats utilized by fire agencies throughout the County are highly inconsistent, uncoordinated, and therefore not readily evaluated and compared. The standard Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating system would be useful to adopt. Response time data are not well described or consistently reported by the jurisdictions, making accurate assessment difficult, especially by other agencies or by the public.

**AGREE**

**PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

**DISAGREE** – explain why

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

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District participates in reviews with the Insurance Services Office and is not aware how other agencies in the County track the above criteria.

**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):**

Local law enforcement agencies (police or sheriff) or emergency management agencies (city or county OES) are responsible for evacuation issues and this is not under the purview of this Board.

**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**):

The Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District does not monitor other Fire Agencies reporting to the above stated standards. The staff of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District reports to their Board much of the above identified information at the scheduled District Board meetings.



**Recommendations**

**R1.** Santa Cruz County, under the auspices of the Emergency Management Council (EMC) with LAFCO support, should study a governing structure that would tie all fire agencies in the County together with common leadership, objectives, sharing of data, and maximized use of resources. (F23, F25)

- 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

**R4.** The fire districts of Santa Cruz County should establish a plan by January 2021, to develop actionable Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) that follow the framework established by the 2018 Santa Cruz County - San Mateo County CWPP. (F2, F5, F22)

- 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

**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, 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

**R11.** The CAL FIRE Ready for Wildfire website should be actively promoted and shared within the community via all available means, including printed descriptive materials inserted into utility and property tax bills, by December 31, 2020. (F19–F21)

- 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

**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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

**R16.** Fire departments throughout the County should take an active role in encouraging communities and neighborhoods to sign up for FireWise, and be measured on their success by their respective governing boards on an annual basis. (F19–F22)

- 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

**R18.** County Fire and the fire districts within the County should evaluate whether purchase of Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRADs) would be beneficial in helping notify residents to evacuate in an emergency by December 31, 2020. (F12, F15, F17, F18)

- 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

**R21.** County emergency planners at all levels should provide notification of evacuation routes and/or shelter-in-place options by March 31, 2021. Notification plans should be provided for when power is out and dissemination of information by wireless or internet is difficult or impossible. (F11, F14, F15, F17, F18, F27)

- 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**



**R23.** Santa Cruz County and Cities should invest in an ALERTWildfire Imaging Surveillance system. Cameras should be purchased, installed, and tested to achieve full coverage of the County by the beginning of the 2021 fire season.  
(F4)

- 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:**

**This item is not under the purview of the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.**

## **Penal Code §933.05**

1. For Purposes of subdivision (b) of §933, as to each Grand Jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
  - a. the respondent agrees with the finding,
  - b. the respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
2. For purpose of subdivision (b) of §933, as to each Grand Jury recommendation, the responding person shall report one of the following actions:
  - a. the recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action,
  - b. the recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation,
  - c. the recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report, or
  - d. the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
3. However, if a finding or recommendation of the Grand Jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a County department headed by an elected officer, both the department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the Grand Jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority. The response of the elected department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her department.
4. A Grand Jury may request a subject person or entity to come before the Grand Jury for the purpose of reading and discussing the findings of the Grand Jury report that relates to that person or entity in order to verify the accuracy of the findings prior to their release.
5. During an investigation, the Grand Jury shall meet with the subject of that investigation regarding that investigation unless the court, either on its own determination or upon request of the foreperson of the Grand Jury, determines that such a meeting would be detrimental.
6. A Grand Jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the Grand Jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. **No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.**