



Ben Lomond Fire Protection District
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Finding 1: The consolidation of Fire and Emergency Medical System dispatch services at the Santa Cruz Regional 911 center and mutual aid agreements between districts have created an efficient virtual single service district for those services in the entire county.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

Partially Agree:

While dispatch services have been streamlined and become very efficient, it has created some potential for lag time in non-emergency responses; especially for the volunteer agencies. Career fire agencies respond to non-emergency requests quite often, in some areas as much as 12% of responses are for non-emergency, public service requests/calls; in fact in Santa Cruz County that percentage stands at 9%. The lag time comes into play for volunteer agencies, where some dispatchers are very hesitant to dispatch a non-emergency call during “non-office” hours, such as early morning hours... because said agencies are not “staffed” around the clock.

Just because an incident is classified as non-emergency does not mean that there is no urgency needed in mitigating a problem. A water leak may be a non-emergency incident, however, unchecked it can and often will lead to flooding and can result in significant damage.

County Communications (NetComm) should dispatch ALL non-emergency requests in the same manner; if a career agency would/will respond to such an incident during “off-hours”, and is therefore dispatched immediately; the same must be the case for volunteer agencies.

Finding 2: Shared services between fire districts have improved response times, training, and services across the county.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

Partially Agree:

Unsure exactly how “shared services” would lead to improved response times; shared services are usually prevention, maintenance and in the case of the county, dispatch services. A centralized dispatch probably improves call handling times, which would lead to more efficient dispatching, however travel times are what they are... any improvements due to dispatching would show in the “call-taking” time where an incident is triaged, located and then appropriate agency(ies) are dispatched.

Shared training and joint purchasing have been around for a little while now and lead to better efficiency in skills and more purchasing power with apparatus and equipment. These would not have any affect, however, on response times (with the exception of perhaps newer, safer apparatus).

What could lead to improvements in response times, from a ‘shared service’ point of view would be/are improvements to mutual aid, such as the concepts of “boundary drops” where the closest apparatus is dispatched, regardless of jurisdiction.

Finding 11: The differences in policies and procedures of the four fire protection districts in the San Lorenzo Valley inhibit future consolidation.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE - explain disputed portion below

DISAGREE - explain below

Response explanation (required for responses other than “Agree”):

Partially Agree:

The San Lorenzo Valley fire districts, along with other stakeholders, such as Scotts Valley Fire, Cal-Fire and Branciforte Fire have created a “District Council” where various chief officers and or board members/administrators meet to discuss challenges facing these areas specifically. As direct result, “joint policies” have been formulated to address such concerns and bring all stakeholders into greater consistency with policies. These agencies also participate in joint training and prevention details in an effort to increase inter-operability and efficiency.

The biggest inhibition to future consolidation of the SLV fire districts is that most districts serve as the sole representative of “local government” for said town (or geographic area). The fire stations serve as the meeting location for various civic groups active in those towns (or geographic areas). This creates a

feel of autonomy for each town, all of whom are unincorporated; and serve as a great source of local pride. This has been alluded to in the previous Grand Jury report.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7: The four fire protection districts in the San Lorenzo Valley should further align their policies and procedures in anticipation of future consolidation.

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED

HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE

- indicate timeframe below

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

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED - explain below

Response summary, timeframe or explanation:

Has Been Implemented:

Please see the response above regarding the District Council. The various agencies and stakeholders have been meeting and working to more closely align policies and practices; in addition to joint purchasing, joint training and joint fire prevention activities.

Being made up of a majority of volunteer agencies does restrict funding and can make for slower progress; however significant gains have been made and will continue.

Future steps could include such ideas as boundary drops added into mutual aid practices and shared equipment specifications for such equipment as fire hose, protective clothing and self-contained breathing apparatus.