



Grand Jury Responses for READY AIM FIRE

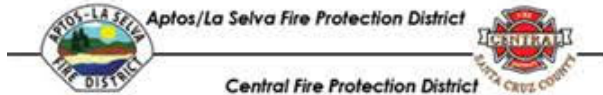
1 message

Sarah Melton <SarahM@aptosfire.com>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 10:25 AM

To: "grandjury@scgrandjury.org" <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

Attached are the responses to the SC Grand Jury "Ready-Aim-Fire" reports, for Aptos/La Selva FPD and Central FPD. Hard copies are being mailed out today as well. Please let us know if you have any questions regarding these reports, or any issue in opening the attachments. Thank you!



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2 attachments



2020-09-21 APT BoD Response to Grand Jury-Ready Aim Fire.pdf
235K



2020-09-21 CTL BoD Response to Grand Jury-Ready Aim Fire.pdf
238K



**The 2019–2020 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury
Requires that the
Central Fire Protection District of Santa Cruz County
Board of Directors
Respond to the Findings and Recommendations
Specified in the Report Titled
Ready? Aim? Fire!
by October 1, 2020**

When the response is complete, please

1. Email the completed Response Packet as a file attachment to 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 governing body's response approval: **September 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.

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.

X **PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

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

The Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Protection Districts are not in a position to judge whether the County is adhering to California Government Executive Order 1.8.19-EO-N-05-19.

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.

X **PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

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

The Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Protection Districts are identifying, tracking, assessing for impact, and reporting progress on wildfire risk management to our respective Boards.

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

X **AGREE**

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

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

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

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.

X **AGREE**

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

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.

X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

X **AGREE**

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

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.

 X **AGREE**

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

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.

X **AGREE**

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

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.

X **AGREE**

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

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.

X **PARTIALLY AGREE** – explain the disputed portion

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

The ISO rating system is one measure of fire protection in a community. It is developed by the insurance industry for their purposes, and is not a particularly comprehensive nor useful tool for assessing the overall effectiveness of a fire protection system. Local government agencies do not “adopt” the ISO rating system.

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.

X **AGREE**

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

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.

X **PARTIALLY DISAGREE** – explain the disputed portion

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

The Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Protection Districts have adopted performance standards, and the respective Boards receive quarterly reports documenting performance relative to the standards.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The Aptos La/Selva and Central Fire Protection Districts will be happy to participate in any such discussion, perhaps under the auspices of the Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association, in whatever timeline the County, the EMC, and/or LAFCO determine is prudent.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Protection Districts by January 2021.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Protection Districts by July 1, 2021.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Requires further analysis as to which printed materials are most appropriate and the willingness or ability of the various agencies to include those materials in their mailings. Analysis will be completed by December 31, 2020.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Requires further analysis as to which printed materials are most appropriate and the willingness or ability of the various agencies and companies to include those materials in their mailings. Analysis will be completed by December 31, 2020.

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)

X **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Has been implemented within the Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Protection Districts through the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) program. A written report will be presented to the Boards following the close of the calendar year.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Requires further analysis as to the community's willingness to accept such devices given their visual, noise, and other environmental impacts; analysis would be required to determine the number and location of such devices; obtaining easements for installation of the devices; and securing power and means of activating the devices. Responsibility for funding the devices and identifying the source of the necessary funds also needs to be considered. The Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Districts question whether December 31, 2020 is a realistic target for such an analysis.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Has not been implemented, but will be implemented by March 31 2021.

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)

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

Response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Requires further analysis as to the community's willingness to accept such devices given their potential environmental impacts; analysis would be required to determine the number and location of such devices; obtaining easements for installation of the devices; and securing power and means of activating the devices. Responsibility for funding the devices and identifying the source of the necessary funds also needs to be considered. The Aptos/La Selva and Central Fire Districts question whether the beginning of the 2021 fire season is a realistic target for implementation of an ALERTWildfire Imaging Surveillance system.

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.**