



Santa Cruz County  
Civil Grand Jury

Grand Jury <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

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## Ready? Aim? Fire! Grand Jury Response

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**Beatriz Flores** <beatriz.flores@cityofwatsonville.org>  
To: grandjury@scgrandjury.org

Fri, Dec 11, 2020 at 11:39 AM

Dear Mr. Goldberg:

Please see the attached response regarding response Ready? Aim? Fire!

Will you please confirm receipt.

Sincerely,



**Beatriz Vázquez Flores, MMC**

City Clerk - (831)768-3040 or (831)768-3042

275 Main St., Suite 400, Watsonville CA, 95076

[beatriz.flores@cityofwatsonville.org](mailto:beatriz.flores@cityofwatsonville.org)

**Business Hours: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday - Friday.**



**Grand Jury Response\_Fire.pdf**

112K

**The 2019–2020 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury**

**Watsonville Fire Department**

**Response to the Findings and Recommendations**

**Specified in the Report Titled**

**Ready? Aim? Fire!**

**Santa Cruz County on the Hot Seat**

**Chiefs,**

Please write your response to each finding and recommendation. If you need it, instructions for respondents are on the next page.

I have bookmarked the starting page for findings and recommendations. If you click on the blue text below and then select bookmark, it will take you to the beginning of that section. I also made this available at the bottom of the instructions page.

**[Findings](#) start on page 3**

**[Recommendations](#) start on page 16**

## 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.

**Findings** start on page 3

**Recommendations** start on page 16

**Findings**

**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 City of Watsonville does not have any wildland interface area that would require collaboration with PG&E. It is unknown if PG&E has met with other agencies who have areas that may be at risk due to their proximity to PG&E electrical equipment.

**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**):

**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**):

If the information is requested, it is our understanding that it can be provided by Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1.

**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**):

**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**):

The areas that may benefit from an LRAD are those in the areas where fire danger is high and cell service is spotty to non-existent. Santa Cruz County would not need such devices across the entire County.



**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**):

Outreach is conducted but it is also up to county residents to take an active part in their own safety.

**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**):

**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**):

**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**):

**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**):

CalFire CZU meets with all Santa Cruz County chiefs on a regular basis and relays necessary information regarding fire dangers.

**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**):

**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**):

**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

**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 will require agreement by all agencies before a specific time frame can be given.

**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:**

Since the City of Watsonville does not have wildland interface areas this would not be needed in the City. Information can be shared on Social Media to assist surrounding agencies to encourage their communities.

**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:**

Since the City of Watsonville does not have wildland interface areas this would not be needed in the City.

**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:**

Since the City of Watsonville does not have wildland interface areas this would not be needed in the City. Information can be shared on Social Media to assist surrounding agencies to encourage their communities.