

THOMAS D. ALLMAN
Sheriff-Coroner



Undersheriff Gary Hudson

Captain Kevin Broin
Field Services
Captain Tim Pearce
Corrections

County of Mendocino Office Of The Sheriff-Coroner

July 14, 2008

Honorable Cindee Mayfield, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California
County of Mendocino
County Courthouse
Ukiah CA 95482

RE: Response to Report of the 2007-2008 Grand Jury

Dear Judge Mayfield:

Attached and enclosed please find my responses to the Grand Jury's report entitled:

**EMERGENCY... WHAT EMERGENCY?
A Grand Jury Report on
Airports in Mendocino County**

The Grand Jury requires me to respond to portions of a table of airport characteristics, all general findings and all general recommendations contained in this report. My responses are as follows.

Table of Airport Characteristics

- **Rows K, L, M & W, Columns 1 - 5:**

Without further information I can neither agree nor disagree with these findings. The Sheriff's Office does not exercise any jurisdiction over airport emergency plans, supplies, drills or training.

- **Row Y, Columns 1 - 5:**

I agree with this finding.

General Findings**1. *The airports are not included in the County EOP.***

Sheriff's Response: I disagree with this finding. The County's Emergency Operations Plan contains several references to the County's airports. Page 16 contains a general description of the location and capabilities of the airports. Page 20 contains a brief discussion of the role the airports would play following a major earthquake. A reference to the airports also appears under the responsibilities of the Air Operations Branch Leader on pages 144 and 145; and the Situational Analysis Unit Leader on pages 150-152. The County's Emergency Operations Plan is a basic plan. It establishes the emergency management organization; identifies the responsibilities, policies and procedures required to protect health and safety; and it establishes the operational concepts associated with response and recovery. It is not meant to provide a detailed assessment of the planning, training, risk, emergency response or recovery operations related to airports or any other critical infrastructure.

2. *The existing emergency plans are for airport related incidents only and do not include annual training with airport personnel or fire departments.*

Sheriff's Response: Without further information I can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. The Sheriff's Office does not oversee airport emergency plans.

3. *These airports are not staffed on a twenty-four hour basis.*

Sheriff's Response: I agree with this finding.

4. *There are no back-up generators for power failures at any airport.*

Sheriff's Response: Without further information I can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. The Sheriff's Office does not inventory airport facilities, utilities or equipment.

5. *CalStar, an emergency response company, has facilities at only one airport.*

Sheriff's Response: I agree with this finding.

6. *The airport managers were unaware of any County EOP involving their airports.*

Sheriff's Response: Without further information I can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. I have no knowledge of what the airport managers told the Grand Jury or their level of awareness regarding the County's Emergency Operations Plan.

7. ***Airports are not being considered in the EOP as a location for people to gather and be cared for, or the storage of emergency supplies.***

Sheriff's Response: I disagree in part with this finding. The airports are not specifically considered in the EOP as locations "...for people to gather and be cared for, or the storage of supplies," but neither are they discounted. Depending on the nature and scope of the emergency, an airport may or may not lend itself to the types of uses listed by the Grand Jury. For example, an airport hangar could be used as an evacuation shelter, but hangars lack the sanitary and cooking facilities necessary for care and shelter. Air operations during a disaster response and the presence of hazardous materials such as aviation fuel make airports undesirable as an evacuation site. Airports can be used as staging areas for emergency supplies, but the nature of aviation accidents is such that caches of vital equipment may be at greater risk at an airport versus another location.

8. ***Airport managers and emergency personnel consider airports viable portals for the entry of supplies, evacuation, and meeting emergency needs.***

Sheriff's Response: I agree with this finding.

9. ***Airports have no current connection to microwave communication.***

Sheriff's Response: Without further information I can neither agree nor disagree with this finding. I agree that the airports have no current connection to the County's microwave system.

General Recommendations:

1. ***Little River and Ukiah airports should have permanent generators installed to meet the emergency needs of the Coast and the Ukiah Valley.***

Sheriff's Response: This recommendation should be directed to the Board of Supervisors and the City of Ukiah. At one time the Sheriff's Office could offer forfeited assets such as generators to other public entities, but current state and federal asset forfeiture laws prohibit such distributions.

2. ***Fire departments adjacent to all public airports should train for handling airplane crash emergencies at the airport annually.***

Sheriff's Response: This recommendation should be directed to the fire departments serving airports.

3. ***County Emergency Services Coordinator should meet with the managers of all airports to coordinate their inclusion in the EOP.***

Sheriff's Response: This recommendation is directed to the Emergency Services Coordinator and County Executive Officer. The Sheriff's Office does not supervise the work of the Emergency Services Coordinator.

4. ***All airports should have access to the new county-wide microwave system being installed.***

Sheriff's Response: This recommendation should be directed to the Board of Supervisors, City of Ukiah and City of Willits. I fully support the idea of using the new microwave to link essential service facilities, but the decision on how to pay for and maintain these links rests with the governing bodies of the involved agencies.

Should you or the Grand Jury have questions about any of my responses, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Undersheriff, Gary Hudson, at the address and phone number listed below.

Sincerely,



THOMAS D. ALLMAN
Sheriff-Coroner

Cc: Dennis Scoles, Grand Jury Foreman
Jim Wattenburger, Chair – Board of Supervisors
Tom Mitchell, County CEO
Jeanine Nadel, County Counsel