

ALL TOGETHER NOW...
A Report on Emergency Response Coordination
in Mendocino County

May 24, 2007

Summary

In studying the Emergency Operations Plan, as presented in September 2006 to the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (BOS), the Grand Jury found several areas that demand more specific and detailed planning. These include entities or services briefly mentioned in the plan that are independent or, in the case of the Ukiah Airport, city managed. Not including and coordinating with these entities in the planning process may have serious consequences in the event of a major disaster.

Background

The 2006/2007 Grand Jury elected to study the structural changes in emergency services to determine whether the new system would provide the maximum level of preparedness. The goal of the emergency response system is to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a major disaster.

The Grand Jury was alerted to a change in the management and structure of emergency services by several factors:

- 1.) The dissolution of Mendocino Emergency Services Agency (MESA)
- 2.) The modification of Mendocino County Code Chapter 7.04 (Title 7)
- 3.) The hiring of an Emergency Services Coordinator to staff the County's Office of Emergency Services
- 4.) The adoption of the Mendocino Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan

For this purpose, the Grand Jury examined three areas essential to Emergency Preparedness, namely:

- Training;
- Communications;
- Coordination.

This report will be directed toward bringing to the attention of the general public some of the complexities surrounding coordination.

Many different political entities exist within the borders of Mendocino County. When a major disaster occurs many of these entities may be affected. There exist many jurisdictional issues which must be addressed in order for these entities to function in a coordinated manner. It is essential for these issues to be

resolved prior to a disaster, rather than waiting until responders are occupied with more immediate crises.

The issues involved with coordination and cooperation, touch every entity within the County. Some entities fall under State or Federal jurisdiction, not County, which may significantly impact their response. The resulting complexity made it impossible for the Grand Jury to address the entire scope of coordination in the available time.

Methods

The Grand Jury interviewed former MESA staff, county and city personnel, elected officials, special and school district personnel. The Grand Jury studied County and City emergency plans, audits and budgets, County documents and State and Federal requirements and laws, attended public meetings, BOS sessions, workshops, and visited the Ukiah Airport.

Findings

1. Section 7.04.010 of Title 7 defines the purpose of the chapter as: “to provide for the preparation and carrying out of plans for the protection of persons and property within this County in the event of an emergency” and “coordinate the emergency functions of this County with all other public agencies, corporations, organizations, and affected private persons.”
2. The area of responsibility for the County’s emergency response system is referred to as the Operational Area (OA).
3. The OA is defined as “the County and all political subdivisions within the County area, to include cities, special districts and school districts.”
4. During a disaster the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) becomes the hub of response activities.
5. The EOC is a function of County government.
6. In the County there are numerous entities with independent governance that are not under the jurisdiction of the County, e.g. special districts, cities, and tribal lands.
7. The efforts of the EOC will be ineffective without coordination between the various County departments and all independent entities.
8. Since disasters within the OA do not stop at the boundaries of any entity, coordination and cooperation between entities is vital.
9. One of the primary responsibilities during a disaster response is logistics, which involves the movement of resources and personnel within the County, and from outside the OA.
10. In addition to the governmental resources there exist several volunteer and private groups which specialize in emergency response: County Search and Rescue, four wheelers, Horse Posse, Air Squadron, Dog Team, Underwater

Dive Team, and the ham radio operators. Most fire departments in Mendocino County are completely or almost completely volunteer.

11. Special districts provide many services, primarily to the unincorporated areas of the County, including:
 - Water;
 - Sewer;
 - Fire protection;
 - Street Lighting;
 - Cemetery;
 - Air Quality;
 - Hospital;
 - Flood Control;
 - Community Service Districts (CSD); CSDs can provide any of the above services.
 - For a more complete list see Appendix A.
12. The specific roles of special districts are not addressed in the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).
13. Special districts which do not conform to the training requirements for the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), may not be able to receive compensation for some disaster related damage.
14. Without coordination and cooperation before, during, and after an emergency, the services provided by special districts to County residents would be severely impacted during the recovery phase of disaster response.
15. The Ukiah Airport is a department of the City of Ukiah. It must operate under Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules and regulations.
16. History has shown that in the event of a disaster the Ukiah Airport, with its 5,000 foot runway, would become a primary transportation hub for bringing supplies and personnel into the County and staging them for distribution to the rest of the County. Alternate destinations for these resources are the other airports within the OA such as Albion-Little River, Willits, and Covelo. There are several privately maintained runways available as well.
17. Not all of the buildings at the Ukiah Airport are owned by the airport. All airport owned buildings are leased to private entities; these leases allow the buildings to be used for storage and shelter facilities in the event of an emergency.
18. The Ukiah Fire Department is the agency responsible for providing fire protection to the airport.
19. An example of coordination, the Ukiah Valley Fire Department (UVFD) a special district, which is immediately across South State Street from the airport, has an automatic-aid agreement to provide fire protection to the airport.
20. The Native American Tribes consist of numerous independent groups which function under a complicated framework of laws (Federal and State), rules, and relationships. See Appendix B.

21. Some Native American Tribes are at varying levels of developing emergency plans.
22. Testimony reveals that the County currently has no organizational emergency response ties to the Native American tribes within the OA.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the County provide sufficient funds and resources to further develop and implement the coordination mandate of the EOP among the various entities within the OA as required by Title 7. (All Findings)
2. the County initiate discussion with the numerous entities which have independent governance, with the intent of clarifying their respective roles in emergency response. (Findings 6-8, 11-14, 20-22)
3. the County include the numerous independently governed entities in the SEMS and NIMS training. (Findings 13-14)

Comments

The 2006/2007 Grand Jury recognizes that the areas covered in this report scratch only the surface of the entire scope of coordination of disaster response and recovery. It is clear that in the event of a regional level disaster Mendocino County may not be the highest of priorities for State and Federal authorities. In such an event the County must be prepared to be self sufficient until assistance can arrive. The 2006/2007 Grand Jury recommends that future Grand Juries continue oversight of this mandated function of County government.

The current version of the Mendocino Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan can be viewed online at

Response Required

BOS (Findings 1-14, 16, 22; All Recommendations)
County CEO (Findings 1-14, 16, 22; All Recommendations)
Emergency Coordinator (All Findings; All Recommendations)
Mendocino County Sheriff (All Findings; All Recommendations)
Ukiah City Manager (Findings 15-19; Recommendation 2-3)

Response Requested

Consolidated Tribal Health Project, Inc. (Findings 1-3, 6-8, 20-22; Recommendation 2)
Round Valley Indian Health (Findings 1-3, 6-8, 20-22; Recommendation 2)
LAFCO (Findings 1-4, 6-8, 11-14; All Recommendations)

Appendix A

MENDOCINO COUNTY SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Cities

City of Fort Bragg
City of Point Arena
City of Ukiah
City of Willits
Fort Bragg Muni Imp #1
For Bragg Redevelopment
Ukiah Parking #1
Ukiah Redevelopment
Willits Redevelopment

Fire Districts

Albion-Little River Fire
Covelo Fire
Fort Bragg Rural Fire
Leggett Valley Fire
Little Lake Fire
Long Valley Fire
Mendocino Fire
Piercy Fire
Redwood Coast Fire
Redwood Valley-Calpella Fire
Sanel Valley Fire
South Coast Fire
Ukiah Valley Fire

Water Districts

Calpella Water
Elk County Water
Laytonville Water
Mendocino County Waterworks
Millview Water
Redwood Valley Water
Round Valley Water
Westport Water
Willow Water

Miscellaneous Districts

Brooktrails Maint 1976-1
Brooktrails Maintenance
Coast Life Support
Hopland Public Utility
Mendo Coast Recreation & Park
Mendocino County Library

Mendocino County Redevelopment
Noyo Harbor

Cemetery Districts

Anderson Valley Cemetery
Cemetery District of the Redwoods
Covelo Cemetery
Hopland Cemetery
Mendocino-Little River Cemetery
Potter Valley Cemetery
Russian River Cemetery
Westport-Ten Mile Cemetery

Lighting Districts

Alexander Estates Lighting
Covelo Lighting
Fairview Acres Lighting
Hopland Lighting
Laytonville Lighting
Noyo Lighting
Oak Knoll Lighting
Riverwood Terrace Lighting
Ukiah Village Lighting
West Talmage Lighting

Community Services Districts

Anderson Valley CSD
Brooktrails CSD
Copmtche CSD
Covelo CSD
Elk CSD
Gualala CSD
Mendocino CSD
Potter Valley CSD

Hospital Districts

Mendocino Coast Hospital
South Humboldt Comm Hospital

Unified School Districts

Anderson Valley Unified
Fort Bragg Unified
Laytonville Unified
Legget Valley Unified

Mendocino Unified
Potter Valley Unified
Round Valley Unified
Ukiah Unified
Willits Unified

College Districts

College of the Redwoods
Mendocino College
Sonoma Junior College

Elementary Schools

Arena Union Elementary
County Schools
Manchester Union Elementary
Piercy Schools
Point Arena Union High
Unification Failure

School Debt/Bonds

Arena Union Elementary Bond
Fort Bragg Unified Bond
Laytonville Unified Bond
Mendocino Unified Bond
Point Arena Joint Union High Bond
Redwood JC Bond
Ukiah Lease Purchase
Willits Unified Bond

Flood Control Districts

Mendocino County Russian River
Flood Control & Water Conservation
Improvement District

Mendocino County Water Agency

Sanitation Districts

Meadowbrook Manor Sanitation
Ukiah Valley Sanitation

APPENDIX B

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES AND COMMUNITIES Name and office location

Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Redwood Valley

Guideville Band of Pomo Indians, Talmage

Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, Hopland

Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council, Ukiah

Laytonville Rancheria/Cahto Indian Tribe, Laytonville

Manchester Band of Pomo Indians, Point Arena

Noyo River Indian Community, Fort Bragg

Pinoleville Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Ukiah

Potter Valley Tribe, Ukiah

Redwood Valley Rancheria, Inc., Redwood Valley

Round Valley Reservation/Covelo Indian Community, Covelo

Sherwood Valley Rancheria, Willits

Stewarts Point Rancheria, Santa Rosa (members also in Mendocino County)

Yokayo Tribe, Ukiah

NATIVE AMERICAN HEALTH AND HOUSING SERVICES

Consolidated Tribal Health Project, Inc., Redwood Valley

Northern Circle Housing Authority, Ukiah

Round Valley Indian Health, Covelo