

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

Report Title: Emergency Communications at Marin Schools: A Tale of Catastrophe

Report Date: March 13, 2008

Response by: Board of Trustees, Novato Unified School District

By: Dr. Jan LaTorre-Derby Title: Superintendent

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F3, F5, F9, F10, F11
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: _____
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered R1, R2 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach 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 publication of the grand jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 7/3/08 Signed: Jan La Torre-Derby

Number of pages attached 3

RE: Recommendations numbered R1 & R2:

The Novato Unified School District cannot act as the lead agency on these recommendations. The Novato Unified School District stands ready to attend any scheduled meetings.

RESPONSES FROM NOVATO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
TO THE FINDINGS (F) AND RECOMMENDATIONS (R)
OF
THE 2007-2008 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT
“Emergency Communications at Marin Schools: A Tale of Catastrophe”

FINDINGS

F3. No public or private school in Marin is part of MERA.

Response: NUSD is not a part of MERA; we cannot speak for other districts.

F5. The present public school emergency radio communications system is about to go belly up, leaving the schools with no emergency radio communications capabilities.

Response: NUSD is not an expert in communications; however, the present system appears tired. NUSD is relying on MCOE to keep up to date on the status of the system.

F9. Both the Red Cross and Department of Health and Human Services recognize the importance of the school sites as gathering places in times of emergency. Both have contracted with various school districts for their use in times of crisis.

Response: NUSD has contracts with the Red Cross and recognizes the importance of school sites as gathering spaces in times of emergency.

F10. There is a belief that installing MERA radios now could instill a false sense of security in the schools, because in any major crisis the MERA system would be overwhelmed with any immediate help unlikely in spite of MERA.

Response: A MERA radio at each school might instill a false sense of security; however, a MERA radio at each district office with an explanation of the system's capability could prove useful in the short term.

F11. An alternate plan to equip the schools with an emergency radio communications system that could be outside the MERA radio network is in an early stage of consideration.

Response: NUSD is following the MCOE lead on system alternatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Board of Supervisors, the Marin Emergency Radio Authority, the Disaster Council, the Marin County Office of Education, the Marin County Office of Emergency Services, the Marin County Department of Public Works, the Marin County Administrator's Office, the Marin County Department of Health & Human Services, the various public school districts and the private schools should immediately work together to fund and install the MERA system and its radios in all of the Marin's public and private schools.**

Response: NUSD believes an effective emergency communication system between our sites and emergency personnel, whether the MERA system or an alternative, should be initiated.

- R2. In the event it is determined that MERA is not a feasible option for Marin's schools, an effective, alternative emergency radio communications network, independent of MERA, should be immediately modeled, funded and installed in Marin's public and private schools through the collective efforts of the entities identified in Recommendation (R1) above.**

Response: See R1 response.