

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

Report Date: March 13, 2008

Response by: Marin County Office of Education Title: Valley School District  
Responses from the Ross Valley Board of Trustees

FINDINGS

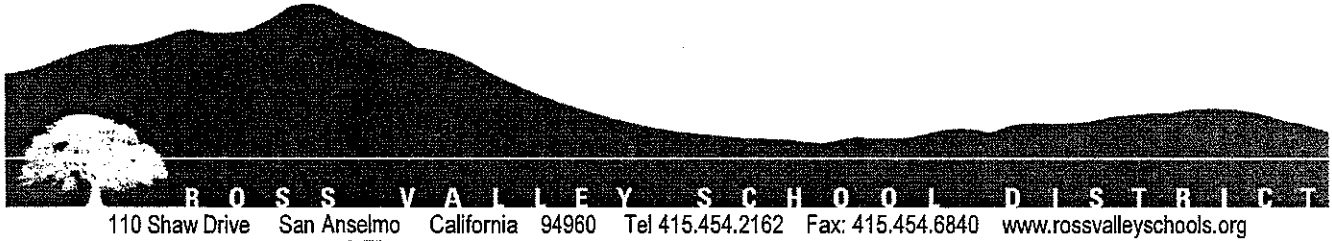
- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F3, F9, F10, F11
  - I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F5
- (Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have been implemented.  
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.  
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered R1, R2 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: June 5, 2008 Signed: Bryce Sumnick, Supt.

Number of pages attached \_\_\_\_\_



**RESPONSES FROM THE ROSS VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
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”***

**PROLOGUE**

Before making formal responses to the Findings and Recommendations of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury, it is important to put the responses in the context of what has been happening related to emergency radio systems for school entities and what developments have affected the Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA). Prior to December, 2007, the view was held by school entities that becoming a part of MERA was only an issue of available funding. Following the storms of late December, it became clear in January, 2008, that the capacity of MERA to include all of the school entities had come into question. It also became clear that school entities needed to do more formal planning about what talk group configurations might be needed to become a part of MERA and what equipment each school entity might require. (For example, requirements for West Marin may well be different than for those communities along the central 101 corridor such as San Rafael, Novato, etc.).

It is also important for the Grand Jury to know that our partners who are mentioned in the findings and recommendations have been working over a period of many years with school entities on issues of emergency preparedness, including radio systems. As school entities formulate more exactly what radio requirements are needed, I believe our partners continue to be ready to help us in any way that they are able to do so.

With this background, the commitment of both the Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) and the Ross Valley School District (RVSD) is to work together to coordinate efforts to review current systems in place and to determine what configurations best facilitate local school communications should MERA determine that it will be able to include the school entities in the countywide system. It is the intent of the Marin County Office of Education to provide a progress report to the Grand Jury by March, 2009.

It is in this context that the responses provided below should be read.

Response from the Ross Valley School District Board of Trustees

**FINDINGS**

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

Response: Agree

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

Response: Each school entity in Marin County has prepared an Emergency Plan which includes provisions for emergency communications between individual school sites and school district offices. The Ross Valley School District has an independent radio system capable of communicating between all sites and the district office. The system is tested monthly and has performed reliably every time it has been called upon for use. There is agreement that the current countywide system used by district offices and the Marin County Office of Education is in need of upgrading or maintenance, given the age of the equipment, etc.

**F9. Both the Red Cross and Department of Health & 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: Agree. Ross Valley School District contracts with the Red Cross. Various school sites have been designated as community gathering points in times of significant need.

**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: Agree

**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: As stated in the Prologue, these considerations will be coordinated and intensified by the Marin County Office of Education in the coming period of time with a preliminary report to the Marin County Civil Grand Jury by March, 2009.

Response from the Ross Valley School District Board of Trustees

**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: It is clear now that further planning on the part of the school entities is needed. When the intensified, coordinated efforts of the Marin County Office of Education and the school entities to determine all of the needed steps and information to become a part of MERA is complete and when the ability of MERA to serve the school entities is determined, we will continue working with all of our partners to find a way to activate an improved emergency radio communications system for school entities.

- R2: In the event it is determined that MERA is not a feasible option for Marin's schools, an effective, alternative emergency radio communication 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: Yes, we support this recommendation to model, fund and install a cost effective emergency radio communication network.

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