

BOT APPROVED

8/26/08

APPROVE RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT:  
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS AT MARIN SCHOOLS: A TALE OF CATASTROPHE

ACTION ITEM  
Board of Trustees  
August 26, 2008

Approve Response to Grand Jury Report: Emergency Communications at Marin Schools

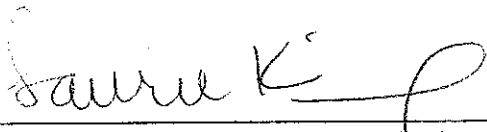
INTRODUCTION:

The Marin County Civil Grand Jury investigated the Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA) which was developed in 1997 as a countywide emergency radio communications system, and of which no school in Marin County is part of the system. The Board of Trustees is required to respond to the investigation findings and recommendations in a public meeting.

Specific findings and recommendations of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury and Tamalpais Union High School District responses are attached.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees approve the District's responses to the findings and recommendations of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report.



Prepared and Approved by Laurie Kimbrel  
Superintendent of Schools

## Tamalpais Union High School District Response to Marin County Civil Grand Jury

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

**Report Date: March 13, 2008**

**Response Date: August 14, 2008**

### 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 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 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.

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, we 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 the Tamalpais Union High School District is to work with and to assist the Marin County Office of Education as they coordinate the efforts of the various school entities 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 a countywide system. In addition, the Marin County Office of Education has agreed to provide a progress report to the Grand Jury by March, 2009.

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

### **Findings:**

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

*Response: The Superintendent and Board of Trustees of the Tamalpais Union High School District agree with this finding by the Marin County Civil Grand Jury.*

#### **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: The Superintendent and Board of Trustees of the Tamalpais Union High School District partially disagree with this finding by the Marin County Civil Grand Jury. The Tamalpais Union High School District has prepared an emergency plan which includes provisions for emergency communications between individual school sites and the school district office. There is agreement that the current countywide system used by district offices and the Marin County Office of Education is in need of upgrading, 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: The Superintendent and Board of Trustees of the Tamalpais Union High School District agree with this finding by the Marin County Civil Grand Jury.*

**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: The Superintendent and Board of Trustees of the Tamalpais Union High School District agree with this finding by the Marin County Civil Grand Jury.*

**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.*

**Recommendations of the Grand Jury and Responses from the Tamalpais Union High School District:**

**Recommendation R1:**

**The Board of Supervisors, the Marin Emergency Radio Authority, the Disaster Council, 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 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, the Tamalpais Union High School District will continue working with our partners to find a way to activate an improved emergency radio communications system for school entities.*


**Recommendation R2:**

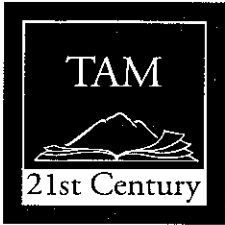
**In the event it is determined that MERA is not a feasible option for Marin's schools, an effective, alternative emergency radio communication network, independent of MERA, should be immediately modeled, funded, and installed in Marin's public and private schools through the collective efforts of the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

*Response: See the response to R1.*

**Signed:**

 , 8/15/08  
Laurie Kimbrel, Superintendent      Date  
Tamalpais Union High School District

 , 8/26/08  
John Wright, Clerk, Board of Trustees      Date  
Tamalpais Union High School District



## TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*California Distinguished Schools: Tamalpais, Drake and Redwood High Schools*

August 27, 2008

Mr. Jeff Skov, Foreperson  
Marin County Civil Grand Jury  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room #303  
San Rafael, CA 94903

Dear Mr. Skov:

Attached, please find the Tamalpais Union High School District's response to the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report: Emergency Communications at Marin Schools: A Tale of Catastrophe. The responses were presented and approved at an Open Session of the Tamalpais Union High School District Board of Trustees on August 26, 2008.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Laurie Kimbrel'. The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Laurie Kimbrel  
Superintendent of Schools  
Tamalpais Union High School District