

**BUTTE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

25 COUNTY CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 200
OROVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95965
Telephone: (530)-538-7373 Fax: (530)-538-7120

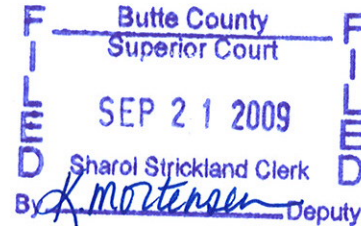
MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

**BILL CONNELLY
JANE DOLAN
MAUREEN KIRK
STEVE LAMBERT
KIM K. YAMAGUCHI**

**Gregory G. Iturria
Interim Chief Administrative Officer**

August 5, 2009

Hon. James F. Reilly, Presiding Judge
c/o Court Administration
Superior Court of California, County of Butte
One Court Street
Oroville, CA 95965



Re: Grand Jury Response

Dear Honorable Judge Reilly:

FINDINGS

F1. The draft General Plan 2030 does not adequately address all fire safety issues in the foothill areas of Butte County.

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

F2. At present, there is only one major evacuation route south from the Upper Ridge and no viable routes north. There is a need for an additional evacuation route from Magalia and Paradise. The upgrade of Forest Road 171, classified as a recreational access road, is not fully funded, and even after completion, will not be sufficient as an evacuation route.

The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. The respondent agrees that there is only one major evacuation route south from the Upper Ridge and no viable routes north. However, it is premature to assume that Forest Road 171 cannot function as a viable evacuation route in the future. The County is actively seeking funding to expand Forest Road 171 and make it a viable evacuation road.

F3. Skyway from Paradise to Chico could be upgraded and used in specific situations as an evacuation route.

The respondent disagrees with the finding. Skyway between Paradise and Chico is a divided four-lane highway that can already be used as an evacuation route in most cases.





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F4. With the exception of Skyway, evacuation routes do not have adequate shoulders for temporarily parking disabled vehicles.

The respondent disagrees with the finding. Clark Road is also a viable evacuation route and does have turnouts for disabled vehicles. However, the terrain along Clark Road does not allow for adequate shoulders along the entire length of Clark Road.

F5. An Emergency Evacuation Plan has been developed for Upper Ridge (Magalia and Paradise Pines) only.

The respondent disagrees with this finding. An emergency evacuation plan has been developed for most areas prone to wild fires. Specifically, the Town of Paradise has developed an Emergency Evacuation Plan for its residents. Additionally, the Fire Safe Councils within Butte County have developed and continue to refine evacuation plans for many communities in Butte County. The Butte County Fire Safe Council and the Office of Emergency Management continue to explore outside grants to fund printing of developed plans for distribution to citizens.

F6. The development of new housing in fire-prone areas of the foothills is ongoing.

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

F7. Butte County does not have a County Fire Code Ordinance specific to Butte County.

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

F8. During the recent wildfires, information on the County Emergency Broadcast System was often several hours old. Therefore, it did not provide timely information about the evacuation and fire status and locations.

The respondent disagrees with the finding. Butte County did not activate the Emergency Broadcast System during the 2008 summer fires. Instead, the County provided timely information about the evacuation and fire status by working closely with the local media, putting the information on the County website, staffing the call center that was available to public inquiries 24/7, and providing information officers and printed materials in affected areas.





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F9. Adequate funding is not in place for foothill evacuation routes. There is currently a movement toward development of a Benefit Assessment District to include the areas of Paradise, the Upper Ridge, Concow, and Centerville.

The respondent agrees with the finding that adequate funding is not in place for foothill evacuation routes. The respondent is unable to comment on the Benefit Assessment District as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

F10. Fire safety information, about emergency evacuation routes and fire preparedness, is not reaching the public for whom it was intended.

The respondent disagrees with the finding. Emergency evacuation routes for many areas within Butte County are available through two sources; Butte County Fire Safe Council website and on display at the many Disaster Preparedness Workshops that are held throughout the year by several of the emergency/disaster response agencies. On several occasions, the Butte County Fire Safe Council has mailed maps and preparedness information to local residents in fire prone areas. Additionally, with the support of local media large newspaper inserts with preparedness information has been supplied to the public. The County will continue to reach out to the public on fire preparedness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. BCGP2030 needs to address emergency evacuation routes and fire preparedness for the foothill areas of Butte County.

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement the recommendation.

R2. Review the limitations of Forest Road 171 such as traffic speeds, volume of cars, and fire prone areas and consider other feasible evacuation routes. Additional roads for evacuation of the Upper Ridge, such as Doe Mill Road, should be investigated.

The recommendation has been implemented. The Butte County Public Works Department worked with the Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) on reviewing the proposed Forest Highway 171 route and improvements. In addition, BCAG completed a study in 1994 entitled, *Feasibility Study of State Route 191 Extension in Butte County*, which evaluated alternate emergency routes from the upper ridge, including Doe Mill-Garland route. The study determined that the Doe Mill-Garland Road route, if developed to standards, would provide improved emergency access to the Upper Ridge.





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R3. Consider immediate modification of Skyway, from Paradise to Chico, as an emergency evacuation route, by removing trees and brush and creating fire barriers on both sides of the road.

The recommendation has been partially implemented. The Butte County Public Works Department removed many of the dead and dying trees and brush within the Skyway right of way after the summer 2008 fires. The Public Works Department will continue removing hazardous trees and brush as resources are available.

R4. BCGP2030 should address how to handle disabled vehicles on emergency evacuation routes and the use of both traffic lanes for evacuation.

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement the recommendation.

R5. Address the need for creation of Emergency Evacuation Plans for all high-risk fire areas in the Butte County Foothills.

The recommendation has been implemented. The Upper Ridge Evacuation Plan has been finalized. For smaller communities with lesser population densities, developing formalized plans may not be the best option. Since wildfire locations cannot be predicted, wildfire event specific evacuation plans are challenging to develop, especially for large areas with low population densities. After the 2008 Summer Wildfires, Emergency Evacuation templates have been developed for each community region which includes sections concerning Decision Points, Evacuation Locations and type of evacuation, Incident Command Information and Comments Section. The templates provide a simple and basic framework for emergency response personnel to develop an evacuation plan and are easily distributed to other emergency officials. Information for the public would then be disseminated through the various information channels.

R6. Put a moratorium on all multi-home development in fire prone areas until all fire safety, traffic, and emergency water supply issues are resolved.

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement the recommendation.

R7. The Butte County Board of Supervisors should request and implement a County Fire Code Ordinance specifically designed for the Butte County foothill's environment.

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement the recommendation.





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R8. In cases of emergency, the County Emergency Broadcast System should update information frequently, with specific, current information about evacuation recommendations, location and status of the emergency, and the forecast of future actions.

The recommendation will be implemented in the future as necessary. As mentioned earlier, the County provided timely information about the evacuation and fire status by working closely with the local media, putting the information on the County website, staffing the call center that was available to public inquiries 24/7, and providing information officers and printed materials in affected areas.

As necessary, the County will use the Emergency Broadcasting System in the future.

R9. The Board of Supervisors should encourage the formation of a Benefit Assessment District in the Ridge.

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement the recommendation.

R10. Consider inserting, in the local phone directory or property assessments, information about emergency travel routes and public assembly points, as shown in Appendix C.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable. The cost of inserting information in the local phone directory is prohibitive, especially in difficult economic times. Such information will continue to be made available on the County website, fire safe council websites, and in various community events.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Gulserian".

John Gulserian
Emergency Services Officer

JG/cd

