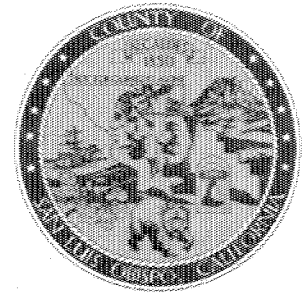


**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

(1) DEPARTMENT Administrative Office	(2) MEETING DATE August 10, 2010	(3) CONTACT/PHONE Geoff O'Quest (805) 781-5011		
(4) SUBJECT Request to approve the recommended response to the 2009-10 Grand Jury report titled "Emergency Medical Response" and forward this response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by August 23, 2010.				
(5) SUMMARY OF REQUEST The Grand Jury issued this report as a result of a citizen complaint regarding how emergency (911) telephone calls are processed in the Sheriff's Dispatch Center and in the Cal Fire/County Fire Dispatch Center. The report focuses primarily on the dispatching of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) helicopter service within San Luis Obispo County. The Grand Jury has requested responses to the findings and recommendations of the report from the Board of Supervisors. Staff's recommended responses are included in this staff report. Responses are also required from Cal Fire/County Fire, the Health Agency as the local Emergency Services Agency (EMSA), and the Sheriff-Coroner. Responses from the first two departments are attached. The Sheriff's response will be provided to the Grand Jury and Presiding Judge separately.				
(6) RECOMMENDED ACTION It is recommended that your Board of Supervisors adopt the recommended response as the Board of Supervisor's response to the 2009-10 Grand Jury report titled "Emergency Medical Response" and forward the response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, with a copy to the Grand Jury, by August 23, 2010.				
(7) FUNDING SOURCE(S) N/A	(8) CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT N/A	(9) ANNUAL COST N/A	(10) BUDGETED? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	
(11) OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/IMPACT (LIST): Cal Fire/County Fire, Public Health, the Sheriff-Coroner, and EMSA, Inc., contributed or were consulted for this staff report.				
(12) WILL REQUEST REQUIRE ADDITIONAL STAFF? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, How Many? ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Term ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Contract ____ <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Help ____				
(13) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S) <input type="checkbox"/> 1st, <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd, <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd, <input type="checkbox"/> 4th, <input type="checkbox"/> 5th, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All		(14) LOCATION MAP <input type="checkbox"/> Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	(15) Maddy Act Appointments Signed-off by Clerk of the Board <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	
(16) AGENDA PLACEMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (Time Est. _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Board Business (Time Est. _____)		(17) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS <input type="checkbox"/> Resolutions (Orig) <input type="checkbox"/> Contracts (Orig + 3 Copies) <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinances (Orig) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Email Resolution and Ordinance to CR_Board_Clerk (in MS Word)		
(18) NEED EXTRA EXECUTED COPIES? <input type="checkbox"/> Number: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		(19) BUDGET ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED? <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted <input type="checkbox"/> 4/5th's Vote Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		
(20) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR) _____ N/A _____		(21) W-9 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	(22) Agenda Item History <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A Date _____	
(23) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW The Administrative Office prepared this item. <div style="text-align: right;"><i>Don Purbst</i></div>				


County of San Luis Obispo

COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, RM. D430 • SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93408 • (805) 781-5011



JIM GRANT
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Geoff O'Quest, Administrative Analyst 

Date: August 10, 2010

Subject: Request to approve the recommended response to the 2010 Grand Jury report titled "Emergency Medical Response" and forward this response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by August 23, 2010.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that your Board of Supervisors adopt the recommended response as the Board of Supervisor's response to the 2009-10 Grand Jury report titled "Emergency Medical Response" and forward the response to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, with a copy to the Grand Jury, by August 23, 2010.

DISCUSSION

The Grand Jury issued this report as a result of a citizen complaint regarding how emergency (911) telephone calls are processed in the Sheriff's Dispatch Center and in the Cal Fire/County Fire Dispatch Center. (Cal Fire provides fire service to the unincorporated areas of the county under contract to the County, in effect serving as the county fire service.) The report focuses primarily on the dispatching of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) helicopter service within San Luis Obispo County. Overall, the Grand Jury found that the emergency response system is "generally excellent," but that there are "some aspects that could be improved" and provides three recommendations. A copy of the report is attached.

The report requests responses to the report's findings and recommendations from the Board of Supervisors and three County departments. Both the Sheriff and Cal Fire are required to respond to the Grand Jury's report, as their dispatch centers play a role in emergency medical response and the dispatching of EMS helicopters. The County Public Health Department is also required to respond in its role as the Local Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA). In this role the Public Health Department is responsible for overseeing ambulance providers, both ground and air.

The required responses to the Grand Jury report are as follows:

- The San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors is required to respond to Findings 2, 3 and 7, as well as Recommendation 3. Staff's recommended responses are included in this staff report.

- The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff is required to respond to Findings 2, 3 and 7, as well as Recommendations 2 and 3.

Note that the Sheriff has chosen to prepare a separate response to this report. The Sheriff's response will be transmitted to the Presiding Judge and the Grand Jury independent of the County's responses in this staff report.

- The San Luis Obispo County Emergency Medical Services Agency (County Public Health Department) is required to respond to Findings 1, 4, 5 and 6, as well as Recommendations 1 and 2. The Department's responses are attached to this staff report.
- Cal Fire/County Fire is required to respond to Findings 3 and 7, as well as Recommendations 2 and 3. The Department's responses are attached to this staff report.

Recommended Board of Supervisors Responses

Staff has prepared the following responses to Findings 2, 3 and 7 and Recommendation 3 for your Board's consideration and approval.

Finding Number 2: The Sheriff's Dispatch Center is responsible for dispatching all ambulance and EMS helicopter service in the county.

Recommended Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

This statement is generally correct, in that requests by first responders for *emergency* ambulance and EMS helicopter service are made to the Sheriff's Dispatch Center (Med-Com). Med-Com does not dispatch *non-emergency* ambulance or EMS helicopter services, such as transports between hospitals. Med-Com does directly dispatch emergency (ground) ambulance.

Finding Number 3: The Grand Jury found confusion between the Sheriff and Cal Fire dispatchers in the 911 calls reviewed. On the four 911 calls reviewed dispatchers refused incident commanders requests for a helicopter.

Recommended Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding.

The Board is not familiar with the four 911 calls referred to in the finding and cannot judge whether it agrees with this statement. The Board does recognize, however, that there have been disagreements between Med-Com and Cal Fire in particular cases over the need to dispatch an EMS helicopter. In some cases this has led to delays in dispatching the helicopter or to a refusal to dispatch a helicopter, in spite of an incident commander's request.

Under current version of Policy 119, the policy governing dispatch EMS helicopters, incident commanders may take responsibility for meeting the time and need criteria necessary to justify launch of an EMS helicopter. Following this policy should avert delays and refusals by the Med-Com dispatchers.

It should be noted, however, that at the time the incidents reviewed by the Grand Jury took place, this the version of Policy 119 in effect (dated October 2007) did not include this statement. The version of Policy 119 attached to the Grand Jury report, which was an earlier version of the current Policy 119, did include this statement, however. This may lead to the incorrect conclusion that dispatchers were clearly

not following the policy in the incidents reviewed by for the report. In reality it was not so clear cut. A copy of the previous version of Policy 119 (dated October 2007) is attached to this staff report.

The interpretation of the dispatch policy has been a difficult issue for those involved. Although the policy has been improved and clarified, the Board expects that the agencies involved in EMS helicopter response will continue to work together on this issue and others to ensure dispatching of EMS helicopter service is as fast and effective as possible.

As evidence of this, a meeting was held July 8, 2010 following disagreements over requests for EMS helicopter response over the Fourth of July weekend. The meeting reviewed the newly implemented version of the policy (dated May 2010) to ensure all parties were in alignment on how the policy is being interpreted and implemented. Cal Fire and the Sheriff's Department in particular both report that they now agree that incident commanders have the final say on EMS helicopter requests.

Finding Number 7: Other counties in California have combined police and fire dispatch with reported improved communication.

Recommended Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with this finding.

The Board is not aware of the reports reviewed by the Grand Jury for the report and cannot specifically address them. However, the Board agrees that the co-location of Sheriff and Fire dispatch personnel could potentially be beneficial. Study and analysis would be needed to determine if combining Sheriff and Fire dispatch at the County level is a practical and cost effective solution to improve EMS dispatch communications countywide.

Recommendation Number 3: The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff, SLOEMSA and the County Board of Supervisors should pursue combining Sheriff and Cal Fire dispatch operation centers.

Recommended Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation requires further analysis.

As noted, thorough study and analysis is need needed to determine if combining Sheriff and Fire dispatch at the County level might be practical, cost effective and improve service. Currently neither the Sheriff nor Cal Fire/County Fire has a facility that would allow co-location of both dispatch centers. While Cal Fire is working with the State to replace its current headquarters in San Luis Obispo, that project does not currently envision co-location and is still in its early stages, with the completion of the facility still many years in the future.

Under the current and expected future economic and fiscal environment at all levels—federal, state and local—financing either a new facility or remodel of an existing facility may likely be cost-prohibitive. The Cal Fire/County Fire response (attached) notes that there are potentially several less-costly alternatives to co-location that should also be explored as part of the study and analysis of this recommendation.

Whatever the result of the analysis, studying this recommendation and implementing a solution will require the participation and coordination of several departments and agencies. Because of this, and because a newly elected Sheriff will be coming on board with the County in November, the usual deadline for response to a Grand Jury recommendation within six months is not be feasible. Instead, the

Board will provide the Grand Jury with a report on its study and analysis of this recommendation within one year of this response.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/IMPACT

The response from Cal Fire/County Fire and the Health Agency are attached to this report.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no immediate financial considerations associated with this item.

RESULTS

Adoption of the findings and recommendations will fulfill the County's obligation to respond to Grand Jury reports as specified in Section 933.05 of the California State Penal Code.

ATTACHMENTS

1. The FY 2009-10 Grand Jury Report "Emergency Medical Response."
2. The Cal Fire/County Fire response to the FY 2009-10 Grand Jury Report "Emergency Medical Response."
3. The Health Agency response to the FY 2009-10 Grand Jury Report "Emergency Medical Response."
4. San Luis Obispo County Emergency Medical Services Agency Pre-Hospital Policy No. 119, "EMS AIRCRAFT (HELICOPTER) OPERATIONS. Effective date: 10/18/07.