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Ventura County Civil Grand Jury Announces Release of Report on Cybersecurity Strategies for Cities in Ventura County

The 2019-2020 Ventura County Civil Grand Jury investigated cybersecurity strategies of the Cities in Ventura County to assess each City's preparedness to defend against data breaches and ransomware and identify opportunities to implement improvements.

Cyberattacks on local governments increased across the nation during 2019. Half resulted in ransomware demands. As the reports of these attacks on cities unfolded, it became clear that better preparation could have assisted those cities to avoid major and costly data breaches.

The Grand Jury is mindful of the need not to disclose vulnerabilities of an information technology system of a City. Therefore, this report does not detail any specific cybersecurity vulnerabilities that may have been discovered during the Grand Jury's investigation.

The Grand Jury found that due to the challenges of limited budgets, increasing cybersecurity attacks, the digital revolution and a competitive recruiting environment, Cities would benefit from free or low-cost federal government backed assistance to defend against these challenges.

The Grand Jury recommends the following measures be adopted to bolster the Cities' cybersecurity and potentially decrease cybersecurity expenditures:

- Implement trustworthy website addresses
- Use free federal services for cyber risk assessments, cybersecurity evaluations, incident assistance coordination and cyber exercises/training
- Use cooperative group purchase programs
- Partner with local educational institutions and federal programs to recruit cybersecurity interns or graduating students
- Require cyber liability insurance of the Cities' IT vendors

- Develop and test cyber incident response, disaster recovery and business continuity plans
- Implement federal cybersecurity best practices
- Implement the California Cyber Security Integration Guidance for Teleworkers

While the Grand Jury investigation focused on the Cities, it suggests that similar strategies be considered by the Ventura County government and its agencies as well as independent districts in Ventura County. These include libraries, community colleges, county hospitals, schools, harbors, airports and water districts.

The public is invited to review the entire report at <https://www.ventura.org/grand-jury/fiscal-year-2019-2020/> in the Annual Reports tab in "Fiscal Year 2019-2020."

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