

county of ventura

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TO: Lin Koester, Chief Administrative Office, L# 1940
FROM: John F. Johnston, Director, L# 1000
SUBJECT: 1998-99 GRAND JURY RESPONSE

The General Services Agency (GSA) has been asked to respond to recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 of the "Law, Justice & Public Safety" section of the Grand Jury Report.

Recommendation #1:

Radios be permanently given to each Evacuation Manager in each department that could be used to monitor a situation and report vital information. These radios should be kept on a charger in a central location next to a posted evacuation plan.

Response: The use of radios by department evacuation managers is not recommended for two reasons:

1) Electronic devices such as cell phones, pagers, and radios may activate certain types of explosives. GSA maintains a policy of total radio silence in an event where explosives may be involved.

2) Tight control over the use of electronic devices must be maintained in the interest of public safety. Assigning radios to evacuation managers would impact the ability to control non-critical radio transmissions, i.e., attendance reporting and other communications, and prevent transmittal of emergent information. However, to mitigate the problem we have added a runner to the government center command team. This individual will relay pertinent information to the assembly groups. Also, portable command centers have been purchased and will be stationed in a central location and can be visited by the assembly manager's appointed messenger for updates.

Recommendation #2:

At least one Alternate Assembly Area be established in the event one or more Assembly Areas are inaccessible.

Response: We do not believe the plan should pre-designate an alternate Assembly Area due to the potential for adding confusion during an evacuation. Should a designated area not be available for use during an event, we prefer to have the flexibility to determine the most appropriate alternative location under the prevailing circumstances. This information would be communicated to evacuation managers.



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Recommendation #3:

The Assembly Areas be labeled on light poles in the parking areas.

Response: Response to this recommendation is included under recommendation #4.

Recommendation #4:

The parking areas be labeled in a clear and concise manner.

Response: There has been a long-standing need for better signage in Government Center parking lots. GSA will review and submit a budget request to address this issue in the FY 2000-01 budget.

Recommendation #5: *All exit areas be free of obstruction.*

Response: Monitoring exit paths will be added to the regular security patrol duties to ensure safe passage through all exits. Exits with obstructions will be noted in the nightly incident report, a copy of which will be forwarded to the impacted department, and to Maintenance for removal.

Recommendation #7: *A comprehensive evacuation drill of all buildings in the Ventura County Government Center, including the Main Jail, be done simultaneously. Volunteers could be used to simulate prisoners.*

Response: GSA Special Services will begin working with the principal agencies and departments to determine the feasibility of a campus wide drill.

Recommendation #8: *A phone number be specified, in an evacuation policy, for employees to call in their whereabouts if they are not in the office during a disaster.*

Response: The current evacuation guidelines address this issue. It is the responsibility of every department to have an internal system that provides information on field assignments and location of employees.

JFJ/RA