



COUNTY of VENTURA

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE
SEVET JOHNSON, PsyD
County Executive Officer

Mike Pettit
Assistant County Executive Officer

Scott Powers
County Chief Financial Officer

July 25, 2024

Sent Via E-mail

Honorable Kevin G. DeNoce
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Subject: Approval of Response to the 2023-2024 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Entitled "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System" for Submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

Honorable Judge DeNoce:

In accordance with State requirements, the response from the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to the 2023-2024 Ventura County Grand Jury report referenced above is hereby submitted along with a copy of the respective board letter and minute order.

By way of this email, copies of the response to the subject report (Exhibits 1, 2, and 3), Minute Order, and July 23, 2024 board letter were provided to the Ventura County Clerk; to Superior Court Jury Services; and to the Foreperson of the 2024-2025 Ventura County Grand Jury. As has been the usual practice in past years, Jury Services will provide copies of the response to the State Archives.

Should you have any questions, please call me at 654-2864.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Pettit
Assistant County Executive Officer

Attachments: Board of Supervisors' Response to 2023-2024 Ventura County Grand Jury Report on:

- Response to GJ Report "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System" (Exhibit 1)
- Sheriff's Response to GJ Report "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System" (Exhibit 2)
- Grand Jury Report "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System" (Exhibit 3)
- Minute Order
- Board Letter dated July 23, 2024

Copies:

- County Executive Officer, Sevet Johnson, PsyD
- County Clerk, Michelle Ascencion
- Jury Services Manager, Amy Turner
- 2024-2025 Ventura County Grand Jury Foreperson, Barbara Rush



**BOARD MINUTES
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF VENTURA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**SUPERVISORS MATT LAVERE, JEFF GORELL,
KELLY LONG, JANICE S. PARVIN AND VIANEY LOPEZ
July 23, 2024 at 8:30 a.m.**

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE - Approval of Response to the 2023-2024 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Entitled, Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System for Submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

- (X) All Board members are present.
- (X) The following person is heard: Mike Pettit.
- (X) The following document is submitted to the Board for consideration:
(X) Comment letter from Teresa Jordan
- (X) Upon motion of Supervisor Parvin, seconded by Supervisor LaVere, and duly carried, the Board hereby approves recommendations as stated in the Board letter.

By: Lori Key
Lori Key
Deputy Clerk of the Board



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July 23, 2024

Board of Supervisors
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Approval of Response to the 2023-2024 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Entitled "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System" for Submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that your Board consider and approve, with or without modification, the response to the 2023-2024 Ventura County Grand Jury Report entitled "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System" (Exhibit 3) for submittal to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in accordance with Penal Code section 933(c).

DISCUSSION:

Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05 require that your Board comment on Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury pertaining to County government under your authority.

The 2023-24 Grand Jury issued a report dated May 22, 2024, entitled "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System." The Grand Jury required a response from your Board regarding findings one and two, and recommendations one and two. The Grand Jury also required a response from the Ventura County Sheriff on the same findings and recommendations as your Board. The proposed response for your Board's consideration was prepared in coordination with the Sheriff, Information Technology Services and the County Executive Office for your approval and is attached as **Exhibit 1**. The Sheriff's separate response to the Grand Jury is attached for reference as Exhibit 2.

The 2023-2024 Grand Jury investigated the readiness and compatibility of radio communication systems used by first responders in Ventura County, identifying that the ability for first responders to communicate seamlessly is crucial for effective coordination during major incidents. The Grand Jury's study was prompted by the communication issues experienced during the 2018 Borderline Bar and Grill mass shooting in Thousand Oaks which underscored the critical need for a unified radio system among various first responder agencies.

Since the Borderline incident, the Grand Jury identified that Ventura County has made substantial improvements to its first responders' communication systems. The Grand Jury's report outlines these advancements and identifies ongoing challenges. Ventura County's law enforcement and emergency response agencies, including the Ventura County Sheriff's Office (VCSO), the California Highway Patrol (CHP), and various city police and fire departments, are now better equipped to communicate during emergencies but there is still some remaining work to be completed.

The key findings and commendations noted in the report are summarized as follows:

- Following the 2018 Borderline incident, the VCSO and other agencies recognized the need for a more integrated radio communication system. The Ventura County Regional Radio System (VCRRS) was developed to enhance interoperability and provide greater channel capacity.
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) allocated 20 frequencies to Ventura County for this purpose, and the county has progressively outfitted transmission sites with 700 MHz equipment.
- Significant funding was secured to upgrade the county's radio system, including over \$32 million approved by the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) in 2023. This funding aims to improve clarity, coverage, reliability, and provide additional channels and cellular service.
- The BOS also adopted a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the VCRRS, securing participation from multiple agencies, including the VCSO, the District Attorney's Office, and the Probation Agency.
- Despite improvements, some systems currently in use by various agencies are over 20 years old and lack modern features such as encryption and building penetration capability.
- Training for first responders on the new systems is crucial. The Grand Jury emphasized the need for simple, plain broadcasts to accurately relay information during emergencies.

- The Grand Jury commended the Ventura County Information Technology Services Department and the Office of Emergency Services for their foresight and initiative in developing the VCRRS and creating a satellite interface for the system.
- Overall, the Grand Jury's report highlights significant progress in Ventura County's emergency communication capabilities while emphasizing the need for continued efforts to ensure all first responders are adequately equipped and trained for future emergencies.

Contained within the Grand Jury Report were nine (9) recommended actions for our local cities and the County to implement to improve interoperable communications between first responders and enhance coordination during major incidents. Among the key recommendations noted in the Grand Jury Report were: to complete the transition to the upgraded system; implement an integrated testing and training plan; and finalize memorandums of understanding to join the VCRRS for consideration by the Port Hueneme and Santa Paula City Councils.

The County's proposed response to the Grand Jury for your Board's consideration agrees with the findings and partially agrees with the recommendations. The key deviation from the recommendations is with timing. The current project schedule for the Ventura County Regional Radio System extends well into 2026 making meeting the Grand Jury's recommended deadline of July 2025 not possible for both completion and testing of the system. The remaining work to be done to complete the system involves design, engineering, radio signal propagation studies, equipment purchase, buildout and testing of all the necessary mountain top, dispatch, fixed and mobile radio infrastructure.

To date, a significant portion of this work has been completed and a partial transition to the new Regional Radio System is underway with the deployment of advanced portable two-way radios, however, work to complete the full integrated radio system build-out remains to be completed and will require time beyond July of 2025.

The County of Ventura remains committed to ensuring that all Ventura County Public Safety Agencies have access to interoperable communication systems, including the Ventura County Regional Radio System and is determined to complete this work as soon as possible to support much enhanced communications during major events and incidents.

The responses outlined in this letter were collaboratively prepared with the involvement of the County Executive Office, Sheriff's Office, and Ventura County IT Services. All involved agencies concur with the provided information and fully support the plans for

Board of Supervisors
July 23, 2024
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moving forward. We sincerely appreciate the Grand Jury's efforts in highlighting the importance of reliable, interoperable communication within Ventura County.

This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, Sheriff's Office, IT Services, County Counsel, and the Auditor-Controller's Office. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Pettit, Assistant County Executive Officer, at (805) 654-2864.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sevet Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sevet" being more prominent than the last name "Johnson".

Sevet Johnson, PsyD
County Executive Officer

Exhibit 1: Response to Grand Jury Report "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System"

Exhibit 2: Copy of Sheriffs Response to Grand Jury Report "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System"

Exhibit 3: Copy of Grand Jury Report "Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System"



COUNTY of VENTURA

Grand Jury

800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
Tel (805) 477-1600
Fax (805) 658-4523
grandjury.countyofventura.org

Response to 2023-2024 Ventura County Grand Jury Report Form
(Please See California Penal Code Section 933.05)

Report Title: Linking First Responders - Ventura County Regional Radio System

Responding Entity: Ventura County Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the Findings numbered: F-01 F-02
I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the Findings numbered:
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the Findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
Recommendations numbered R-01, R-02 have not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a summary indicating the timeframe for implementation.)
Recommendations numbered require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation to include: scope and parameters of the analysis or study and timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion with the agency or department head. The timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the report.)
Recommendations numbered will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 7/23/2024

Signed: Mike Pettit

Title: Assistant County Executive Officer

Number of pages attached: 2

Response to Grand Jury Report FormReport Title: Linking First Responders – Ventura County Regional Radio SystemReport Date: July 23, 2024Response By: Mike Pettit Title: Assistant County Executive Officer**FINDINGS:****F-01, F-02: Agree****RECOMMENDATIONS:****R-01: Partially Agree**

The Ventura County Regional Radio System (VCRRS) was approved by the Board on June 20, 2023, with a multi-year implementation plan. The County's key deviation from the recommendation of the Grand Jury is with timing. The current project schedule for the VCRRS extends into 2026 making meeting the Grand Jury's recommended deadline of July 2025 not possible for both completion and testing of the system. The remaining work to be done to complete the system involves design, engineering, radio signal propagation studies, equipment purchase, buildout and testing of all the necessary mountain top, dispatch, fixed and mobile radio infrastructure.

A significant portion of this work has been completed and a partial transition to the new Regional Radio System is underway with the deployment of advanced portable two-way radios, however, work to complete the full integrated radio system build-out remains to be completed and will require time beyond July of 2025.

To date, the County and vendor have completed the buildout of six (6) sites which cover the entire coastal plain including the jurisdictions of Ventura, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Camarillo, Santa Paula, and Fillmore. The County has currently received executed Memorandums of Understanding from the Cities of Ventura, Oxnard, and Port Hueneme, Channel Islands State University, Ventura County Community College District, Ventura County Probation Department, and the United Water Conservation District.

The County intends to complete seven (7) more sites by October 2024 to cover the remaining densely populated areas of the County including the South end of Ojai, the West end of Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, and Simi Valley. Three additional sites are expected to be operational by the fourth quarter of 2025, and will cover the Ojai Valley, Lockwood Valley, and complete the coverage of the Conejo Valley.

R-02: Partially Agree

Testing of the new integrated system began in early 2023 for the sites that were operational. This included all core integrated components, site equipment, software, and radios. The area covered was the coastal plain. Each agency considering joining the regional network, which included all cities, were provided radios to test their respective jurisdictions.

As indicated in the response to Recommendation R-01, the current project schedule for the VCRRS extends into 2026, making meeting the Grand Jury's recommended deadline of July 2025 not possible for integrated testing and training of the system. The remaining work to be done to complete the system involves design, engineering, radio signal propagation studies, equipment purchase, buildout and testing of all the necessary mountain top, dispatch, fixed and mobile radio infrastructure.

Once the work is completed, full integration testing of all sites will be conducted by the County and participating agencies as part of operational certification and the training plan will be implemented.

In conclusion, the County of Ventura remains committed to ensuring that all Ventura County Public Safety Agencies have access to interoperable communication systems, including the Ventura County Regional Radio System and is determined to complete this work as soon as possible to support much enhanced communications during major events and incidents.