

Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District
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August 17, 2017

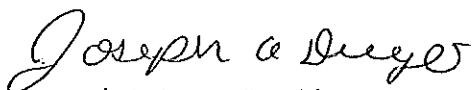
Honorable Jose L. Alva, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 West Weber Avenue, Suite 1306
Stockton, CA 95202

Honorable Judge Jose L. Alva,

Attached to this letter is the required response to 2016-2017 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury Case Number 0616, Countywide Dispatch for Fire, *Two Are Not Always Better than One*. The response was unanimously approved at the August 10, 2017 Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District's regular Board of Directors meeting.

We would like to thank the members of the Grand Jury for their efforts in this review and for the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,


Joseph A. Dugo, President
Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District



Rick Mello, Fire Chief
Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District

Cc: Ms. Trisa Martinez, Staff Secretary, grandjury@sjcourts.org

Attachment

Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District

San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury

2016-2017 Case No. 0616

Countywide Dispatch for Fire

Two Are Not Always Better Than One

Findings:

- **F1.2: The vast majority of fire agencies are in favor of a single countywide emergency fire dispatch center; they agree it would be in the best interest of the citizens and the County of San Joaquin.**

While this statement is valid as a basic premise, all agencies must be willing to truly believe it regardless of where and who would be the provider. Unless all stakeholders are willing to have discussions with open minds and not be pre-disposed to an answer. As a smaller agency governance and cost remain a key concern.

- **F1.3: There is disagreement as how to organize, operate and fund a single countywide fire dispatch capability. This has led to a failure to pursue creation of a single countywide fire dispatch center.**

There needs to be a complete and unbiased study undertaken and completed with realistic timeframes. Significant needs such as service levels, staffing levels, performance standards, accreditations, capabilities, technology and cost are all major factors that must be taken into account.

- **F2.1: Automatic aid agreements between neighboring fire agencies can reduce response times.**

Automatic Aid Agreements are currently in place between neighboring agencies in San Joaquin County and neighboring counties and have been for some time. The Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District provides and receives automatic and mutual aid from all neighboring agencies in San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties.

- **F2.2: AVL on all fire vehicles and AVL capability at dispatch centers can reduce response times.**

AVL can save time if all agencies have the capability and subscribe to closest unit methodology. Dispatching the closest, most appropriate unit would have to be a countywide policy embraced by all cities and districts. The Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District currently has AVL capabilities through mobile data computers. The District is currently researching additional technology which would expand current capabilities, however, cost is a concern in implementing AVL across a fleet of ten apparatus/support vehicles.

- **F3.1: There is disagreement among San Joaquin County Fire Chiefs regarding EMS Policy 3202. Some believe EMS Policy 3202 does not allow responders to provide the level of service expected in their communities.**

The San Joaquin County Fire Chiefs Association was requested by the EMS Director to appoint members representing both JPA's to meet and confer with him regarding Policy 3202. The Stockton JPA was represented by Chief Newman (Stockton) and Chief Rooney (Lodi), while JRUG was represented by Chief Martel (Montezuma) and Chief Bitters (Ripon). Chiefs Rooney and Martel are the elected Chairpersons of their respective JPA's. After discussions took place regarding the issues brought forward by all, changes were made to Policy 3202 that addressed all concerns. The policy currently in place represents the result of those discussions and changes.

Recommendations:

- **R1.3: By Dec. 31, 2017, County EMS in collaboration with the City of Stockton, The Joint Radio Users Group and the San Joaquin County Regional Fire Dispatch Authority develop a task force and provide a plan to consolidate into a single countywide emergency fire dispatch center.**

The Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District will continue to support JRUG and its long standing working relationship with the San Joaquin County EMSA. As part of JRUG we will continue to work with other interested parties to explore any and all viable options. As previously mentioned, as a smaller agency, governance and cost are a key concern.

- **R2.2: By December 31, 2017, all county fire agencies, develop a plan to fund, purchase and implement AVL on all emergency fire vehicles.**

As previously stated, the Escalon Consolidated Fire Protection District currently has AVL capabilities through mobile data computers and is researching additional technology which would expand current capabilities. There are costs associated with this technology, which include procurement of equipment, installation and on-going monthly fees for data services. These costs add to already over-burdened budget costs caused, in part by unfunded mandates by the state and county. While it is simple to state that all units should have AVL, some such as utility or support vehicles may not benefit. An additional consideration to this component is whether or not the dispatch center has the infrastructure to support the field units. VRECC has the necessary infrastructure in place and has for approximately twelve years; while the report indicates that the Stockton Fire Dispatch Center does not.