



# Ripon Consolidated Fire District

142 S. Stockton Ave. Ripon, CA 95366  
Phone 209-599-4209 Fax 209-599-2847

**Directors**  
Bryce Perkins  
Don Wever  
Tamra Spade  
Harrison Gibbs  
Matt Cultrerra

**Fire Chief**  
Dennis Bitters

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ROSA JUNGUENDO, CLERK

*Rosa Junguendo*  
July 27, 2017

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

Honorable Judge Alva,

The Board of Directors of the Ripon Consolidated Fire District is in receipt of the report issued by the San Joaquin County Grand Jury, "Countywide Dispatch for Fire," Case 0616, and herby is submitting this response as required.

The Ripon Consolidated Fire District (RCFD) has been a member of the San Joaquin County Joint Radio Users Group (SJCJRUG) Joint Powers Agreement since its inception in 2005. In addition to providing fire suppression and rescue response, the RCFD has provided Advanced Life Support (ALS) Ambulance Transport since 1974. In fact, the RCFD was the first ALS Provider in San Joaquin County.

We feel very strongly that we, along with the other Districts, undertook the necessary steps to not only provide for a high quality and compliant dispatch function, but also to control the cost to the taxpayer for this service. This has resulted in today's nationally dual-accredited Regional Dispatch Center, Valley Regional Emergency Communications Center. To this end, we have seen the value of working collaboratively with our partner agencies and private industry to remain progressive and cost effective.

As a JPA, our Chiefs have authored a response that echoes our feelings for a response as a Board. We are attaching that response from SJCJRUG as many others may do the same. We also would like to include the following comments that may be more specific to our Agency:

1. Prior to 2005, RCFD received dispatch services from the Stockton Fire Department (SFD). During that time, SFD escalated the cost for dispatching several times, with no added value or service. They were unwilling/unable to meet recognized standards, including meeting the requirements set forth in the ALS Provider Agreement the RCFD has with the San Joaquin County Emergency Medical Services Agency (SJCEMSA). After repeated requests for a plan to meet these requirements, we were told to look elsewhere for dispatch services. RCFD, along with the other founding members of SJCJRUG, did just that and entered into agreement with American Medical Response in 2005 through the SJCJRUG JPA.

2. The RCFD has operated an ALS ambulance service for over 43 consecutive years in San Joaquin County. We have always strived to provide the highest level of service along with being responsible to our taxpaying customers. As referenced in the report, the only Dispatch Center which is currently approved by the SJCEMSA for ambulance dispatch is VRECC. We feel strongly that in today's times especially, the public-private partnership we have developed has contributed to that goal. If another dispatch solution became available that accomplished these goals, it would of course be considered in the decision-making process.

We realize that the subject of Dispatch in San Joaquin County is complicated. There are many factors unknown to most unless they take the time to thoroughly investigate like has been done. As an ambulance provider trying to maintain its long-standing service in the time of managed healthcare and declining reimbursements from Medicare and MediCal, dispatch is a significant part of the puzzle we must deal with.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this report. Please contact us should you need further.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryce Perkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bryce Perkins, Chairman  
Board of Directors  
Ripon Consolidated Fire District

SJCJRUG Agency Response to Report

San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury

2016-2017 Case No. 0616

This letter serves as a response to the Findings and Recommendations as listed in the Report issued by the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury, titled "Countywide Dispatch for Fire, *Two Are Not Always Better than One 2016-2017*" (Case No. 0616)

We appreciate the time and effort put forth by the Grand Jury in learning about Dispatch Operations in San Joaquin County. While we realize that there may be some clarifications necessary in any report of this nature, there are a few that we will address prior to our response to the formal Findings and Recommendations listed in the report.

***Assignment of Dedicated Fire Dispatchers, Page 102*** - VRECC does, in fact, assign dedicated dispatchers to working fires and major events. This requirement is specifically stated in the contract for dispatch services between SJCJRUG and VRECC that was provided as requested. It also must be understood that any dispatch center's ability to do this would be limited to the number of personnel it has on duty at the time of the increase in need. The staffing level at VRECC is sufficient and constantly maintained to address these peak times.

***Errors in what is communicated between CAD interfaces occur daily*** – This is a perception held by personnel at Stockton Fire Dispatch, not an actuality. The information that is transmitted from VRECC to SFD is exactly the same on both ends. It comes from 911 reporting callers, processed per the County of San Joaquin protocols and procedures, and the resulting information is the same for both agencies. Perhaps training for SFD personnel on understanding this information would be helpful.

***VRECC charges JRUG fire agencies \$23.77 per fire dispatch while Stockton Fire charges its member agencies \$49.77 per fire dispatch*** – While this statement is true, there are some clarifications. VRECC charges \$23.77 for fire-only incident dispatches, but the cost is cut in half for any incident having an ambulance assigned to \$11.90 per dispatch, *which is* an even larger savings as the fire agency only pays for half of the \$23.77 cost. Stockton Fire Department charges the same for all incidents, whether or not they have an ambulance assigned. Finally, all member agencies in JRUG pay the same rate. Stockton Fire has different rates for its member agencies depending on when they joined.

**Finding 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 of 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.*

**Finding F1.3 – There is a disagreement as to 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.*

**Finding 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.*

**Finding 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 county-wide policy, and embraced by all Cities and Districts*

**Finding F3.1 – There is disagreement among San Joaquin County Fire Chief's 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 SJCRUG 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. There have been no issues brought back to either JPA at this time.*

**Recommendation R1.3 – By December 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.**

*SJCJRUG and its members have a long-history of working in conjunction with the San Joaquin county EMSA. We will continue to work with other interested parties to explore any and all viable options.*

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

*As stated in the published report, SJCJRUG members already have AVL capability in place and have been utilizing it. There are two parts to deploying AVL technology, one is for the dispatch center to have the infrastructure, and the other is for the field units to have the proper equipment to send the AVL data. There are costs associated with this technology for each agency. Capital costs to procure equipment for installation in fire apparatus and on-going fees for monthly data services. These costs add to already over-burdened budgets. The determination of which units each specific Agency determines to track in the system is left up to that Agency. While it is convenient to state that all units should have AVL, some such as utility or support vehicles may not benefit.*

*VRECC has the necessary infrastructure in place and has for over 12 years. The Stockton Fire Dispatch Center does not. In fact, the agencies who left VRECC for the Stockton Center abandoned the AVL data processing capability, as they had the necessary in-vehicle equipment.*

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a response to this report.



Chief Edward Martel, Chairman

San Joaquin county Joint Radio Users Group



Date