



INVERNESS PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT

FIRE DEPARTMENT ~ *WATER SYSTEM*

POST OFFICE BOX 469

INVERNESS, CA 94937-0469

50 INVERNESS WAY NO. ~ (415) 669-1414. ~ FAX (415) 669-1010. ~ ADMIN@INVERNESSPUD.ORG

June 19, 2019

Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275
San Rafael, CA 94903

Re: Transmittal of Agency Response to "Wildfire Preparedness: A New Approach"

Honorable Members of the Civil Grand Jury:

Enclosed is the response of the Board of Directors of the Inverness Public Utility District to your report "Wildfire Preparedness: A New Approach."

Sincerely,

Wade B. Holland
Clerk of the Board

enc.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: KENNETH J. EMANUELS, PRESIDENT • DAKOTA WHITNEY, VICE PRESIDENT
KATHRYN DONOHUE, TREASURER • BRENT JOHNSON • DAVID PRESS



SHELLEY REDDING, ADMINISTRATOR
JAMES K. FOX, CHIEF OF OPERATIONS (FIRE CHIEF, WATER SYSTEM SUPERINTENDENT)

Agency Response to Grand Jury Report

Report Title: **Wildfire Preparedness: A New Approach**

Report Date: **April 18, 2019**

Response Date: **July 18, 2019**

Agency Name: **Inverness Public Utility District**

Agenda Date: **June 19, 2019**

Response by: **Kenneth J. Emanuels**

Title: **President, Board of Directors**

FINDINGS

F1. Existing vegetation management codes are both inconsistent and inconsistently enforced.

Response: We cannot agree or disagree with this finding, because we are not in a position to evaluate all applicable agencies' vegetation management codes to determine their consistency or how they are enforced.

F2. There are not enough trained vegetation inspectors or fuel reduction crews.

Response: We agree with this finding.

F3. Current vegetation enforcement procedures are slow, difficult and expensive.

Response: We cannot agree or disagree with this finding, because we are not in a position to evaluate all applicable agencies' vegetation enforcement procedures to determine if they are slow, difficult, or expensive.

F4. Government agencies and safety authorities cannot currently manage vegetation on public lands.

Response: We cannot agree or disagree with this finding, because we are not in a position to evaluate how all applicable government agencies and safety authorities are currently managing vegetation on public lands.

F5. All property owners are responsible for vegetation management on their property, yet they are not sufficiently educated about vegetation management and many do not have the physical and financial resources to create defensible space.

Response: We agree that "All property owners are responsible for vegetation management on their property"; we do not know whether it is true that "they are not sufficiently educated about vegetation management" (some probably are); we agree that "many do not have the physical and financial resources to create defensible space."

F6. Wildfire preparedness education is inconsistent and fails to reach most citizens.

Response: We cannot agree or disagree with this finding, because we have no basis for knowing whether the statement is true.

F7. The most effective method of education is person to person in neighborhoods.

Response: We agree with this statement, but we do not believe that person-to-person education in the neighborhoods should be the only method of education.

F8. Although Marin has 30 plus Firewise neighborhoods, the most in California, they only cover a small percentage of population and land.

Response: We cannot agree or disagree with this finding, because we are not in a position to evaluate the County's Firewise neighborhoods to determine how much population and land each covers.

F9. Sufficient public funds have not been provided to sustain comprehensive wildfire preparedness education.

Response: We agree with this finding.

F10. Educating the public requires a different set of skills than firefighters usually have.

Response: We disagree wholly with this finding because no basis is provided for the conclusion that the skills of trained, professional firefighters are inadequate for educating the public.

F11. Any hesitation to use the WEA system can be deadly even if its alerts might reach people outside of its intended target zone.

Response: We agree that appropriate protocols should be developed for use of all alert systems.

F12. Alert Marin sends the most accurately targeted warning to endangered populations, but it reaches too few residents because it is not well publicized. Both Alert Marin and Nixle require opt-in registration, a serious design flaw

Response: We can agree with parts of this finding. We have no basis for knowing whether Alert Marin "sends the most accurately targeted warnings"; we have no basis for determining how many residents Alert Marin reaches or how well publicized it is; we agree that requiring opt-in registration is a serious design flaw.

F13. Sirens could be a useful and reliable warning system if their numbers and locations were increased to broaden their reach and if they were enhanced with a customized message through LRAD.

Response: We agree that sirens could be useful; we question that they can be guaranteed to be reliable, based on our own experience from the past when sirens were the only means we had for summoning volunteer firefighters.

F14. In the WUI and in many town centers, infrastructure and roads are inadequate for mass evacuations.

Response: We agree with this finding.

F15. Evacuation routes are dangerously overgrown with vegetation and many evacuation routes are too narrow to allow safe passage in an emergency.

R8. **Expand the use of sirens with LRADs.**

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented by us, because our experience with sirens demonstrated that they are poorly suited to the area's topographic constraints.

R9. **Research, develop, and publish plans for the mass movement of populations along designated evacuation routes.**

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented and we are unable to estimate a timeframe for its implementation, but we will participate in its implementation by whatever appropriate authority undertakes to research, develop, and publish such plans.

R10. **Give the highest priority to mitigating known choke points and to maximizing the capacity of existing evacuation routes.**

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented and we are unable to estimate a timeframe for its implementation, because we have no jurisdiction over traffic and roadways. We can provide advice on specifics of potential choke points on the roadways within our community.

R11. **Incorporate and prioritize plans for mass evacuations in all pending and future traffic/road projects along major escape routes.**

Response: This recommendation cannot be implemented by us, because we have no jurisdiction over traffic and road projects.

R12. **Educate, prepare, and drill for evacuations in all communities.**

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented and we are unable to estimate a timeframe for its implementation, but we will participate in its implementation by whatever appropriate authority undertakes these roles.

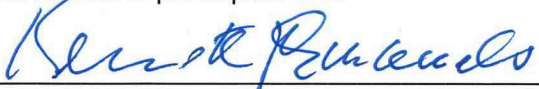
R13. **Fully integrate public transit into the MERA communications system without further delay.**

Response: This recommendation would be supported by us in the event that such a proposal is brought before the MERA board (depending on the specific terms of such a proposal).

R15. **Establish in the form of a Joint Powers Authority an umbrella organization for wildfire planning and preparedness (vegetation management, public education, alerts, and evacuation), funded by a ¼ cent sales tax.**

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented by us, because we have no authority to establish such a JPA or to levy a sales tax. We do support establishment of such a JPA and will take the required actions to participate in it.

Date: June 19, 2019

Signed: 

Total pages: 5

Kenneth J. Emanuels, President, Board of Directors