

**MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY
REPORT TITLED:**

THE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM IN MENDOCINO COUNTY

Discussion

The Board of Supervisors welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury report titled "The Emergency Communications System in Mendocino County". Current Grand Jury procedures state: "[f]indings are the conclusions or judgements that logically flow from the verified facts." In that regard, the Board of Supervisors encourages the Grand Jury to focus on verified facts and avoid unsubstantiated opinions that tend to inflame instead of inform discussion of this critical issue.

Pursuant to the request of the Grand Jury, the Board is responding to the following:

- F1. County leadership has not published a strategic plan for the maintenance, upgrade, and replacement of the system. This has allowed the ECS microwave equipment to continue at *end of life* with an increasing number of outages.

The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with this finding, and is working to address this issue. Information Services, in collaboration with the Executive Office and the Board's Information Technology Ad Hoc Committee, has authored a Master Plan detailing necessary upgrades. Implementation depends on funding allocations in future budgets by the federal, State and local agencies that rely on the system. In addition to publishing a Master Plan, County leadership is in the process of publishing a budget showing the annualized cost (currently borne entirely by County government) of maintaining a communication system that is relied upon, to one degree or another, by every public safety agency that operates anywhere in Mendocino County.

- F2. With an increasing ECS failure rate, as shown in the graph on page 3, every emergency the County faces puts first responders at even greater risk.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

- F3. There is substantial building degradation at the remote sites (vaults), and deferring the needed site upgrades puts any new ECS equipment in jeopardy.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

- F4. The lives of Mendocino County residents depend on the integrity of the remote microwave-radio buildings. By de-prioritizing these buildings, the County is not well positioned to protect the Life, Health, Safety, and Welfare of its residents through ECS.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

- F5. The current BOS faces a planning scenario similar to the 2007 and 2009 BOS, including impending risks to funding due to the current economic situation. Tabling funding for the new microwave system and infrastructure upgrades a second time will impact Mendocino County residents' safety.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

- F6. By not actively pursuing chargebacks for co-location from participating entities at remote microwave sites, the County is losing a potential revenue stream to augment funding for the new system.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding. As indicated in response to F1, the Board of Supervisors IT ad hoc committee, consisting of Supervisors Williams and Gjerde, is currently tasked with presenting a cost recovery plan to apportion operating, capital and maintenance expenses to various state, federal and third party county microwave users.

- F7. By not using the work order system consistently to track maintenance and repairs, there is no supporting documentation for accurate forecasting and budgeting.

The Board of Supervisors partially agrees with this finding. Consistent use of the work order system would have provided more reliable data for forecasting current maintenance costs, but future costs will likely not follow the historic trend due to age of equipment and lack of vendor repair/parts support. The accurate forecast will result from replacement scheduled outlined by the IT Master Plan and supporting documentation from County IS.

- F8. The separate tracking and reporting systems used by Facilities and IS do not interface. This inhibits communication between the two departments and severely limits a coordinated effort to maintain remote sites and associated ECS microwave equipment.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

- F9. The lack of cross training within IS and little formal documentation of maintenance procedures put the ECS at risk by leaving the department without a sufficient number of qualified technicians to manage the County's investment.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding. The concern is understated.

- F10. While the GJ found budgeted line items for Phase 2, Phase 3, and the sheriff's console relocation and replacement, in the IT Master Plan it found no evidence of committed funding by the BOS. This leaves all residents and first responders vulnerable.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

Response to Recommendations:

- R1. The BOS commit funding for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Public Safety Microwave Replacement Project and replacement of the sheriff's dispatch console. (F1, F5, F10)

The Board of Supervisors will document a funding schedule.

- R2. The Executive Office classify structures housing ECS equipment with the same priority as buildings housing people to ensure the required maintenance issues are promptly addressed. (F3-F4)

The Board of Supervisors will direct Facilities to regularly inspect, report status and maintain emergency communications structures at least to the level of county buildings housing people.

- R3. Both IS and Facility departments utilize the existing work order system for all maintenance and repairs of the ECS and associated remote sites to promote accurate forecasting and budgeting. (F7)

The Board of Supervisors will direct IS and Facility departments utilize the existing work order system for all maintenance and repairs of the ECS and associated remote sites to promote accurate forecasting and budgeting.

- R4. As part of Phase 2 of the ECS replacement, the Wiki and work order systems be replaced with a single, index-based system used by both departments which would create efficiency in tracking projects and work orders. (F8)

The Board of Supervisors will direct staff to replace the Wiki and work order systems with an index-based system as part of Phase 2 of the ECS replacement.

- R5. IS develop maintenance procedures for the ECS equipment and documented maintenance schedules. This would support efficiencies in equipment repair and maintenance and facilitate training of new technicians. (F9)

The Board of Supervisors will direct IS to develop maintenance procedures for the ECS equipment and document maintenance schedules.

- R6. The County pursue co-location chargebacks for revenue as recommended in the 2009 Grand Jury report 'Out With The Old And In With The New'. (F6)

The Board of Supervisors will expect the IT Ad-Hoc consisting of Supervisors Gjerde and Williams to present a co-location cost recovery plan to retrieve

capital, maintenance and operating expenses from other agencies, apportioned by share of infrastructure use.