

# County of Santa Barbara Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan

Publication Date: June 2022



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# Document Handling Instructions

**Document Title:** *County of Santa Barbara Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan* (herein referred to as Report)

**Document Control:** The Report was developed to support the County of Santa Barbara (the County) and Operational Area (OA) partners to identify lessons learned and opportunities for improvement based on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic from January 2020 to August 2021. The Report focuses on the activities associated with the OA and the County as a whole. A separate County Public Health Department (PHD) After-Action Report (AAR) and Improvement Plan (IP) will be developed to reflect more specific concepts associated with that Department’s roles and responsibilities as the lead Department for this incident.

The Report was developed leveraging the *California Code of Regulations Title 19. Public Safety Division, 2. Office of Emergency Services, Chapter 1. Standardized Emergency Management System, Article 8. After-Action Reports*. The California Code of Regulations specifically states:

§ 2450. Reporting Requirements.

(a) Any city, city and county, or county declaring a local emergency for which the governor proclaims a state of emergency, and any state agency responding to that emergency shall complete and transmit an after-action report to California Office of Emergency Services within 90 days of the close of the incident period as specified in California Code of Regulations, Title 19, s2900(q).

(b) The after-action report shall, at a minimum, be a review of response actions taken, application of Standardized Emergency Management System, suggested modifications to the Standardized Emergency Management System, necessary modifications to plans and procedures, identified training needs, and recovery activities to date.

The information contained in this document is current as of the date of publication, approved by the Board of Supervisors, in June of 2022. As of the date of publication, this incident is still ongoing.

**Contact Information:** For additional information, please use the following points of contact:

*Table 1. County of Santa Barbara OA COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan Points of Contact*

Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management	Hagerty Consulting, Inc.
<p><b>Kelly Hubbard, Director</b>            County of Santa Barbara Office of Emergency Management            4408 Cathedral Oaks Road            Santa Barbara, California 93110            805-681-5526 (office)            khubbard@sbcoem.org</p>	<p><b>Katie Freeman, Project Executive</b>            Hagerty Consulting, Inc.            1618 Orrington Avenue, Suite 201            Evanston, Illinois 60201            847-492-8454 x119 (office)            katie.freeman@hagertyconsulting.com</p>

# Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world in late 2019 and the first cases arrived in the County in March of 2020. The County initially relied on its extensive pre-established emergency management response structures and capabilities, as they had done for several previous incidents, such as major fires and oil spills or within the context of limited outbreaks, such as H1N1. The nuanced and complex nature of this public health crisis necessitated that the County shift and evolve its approach to OA response multiple times. Furthermore, the extended duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated response, underway as of the date of publication of this Report, significantly strained County and OA human resources and resulted in negative impacts to mental and physical health.

The County has experienced disasters in the previous five years, to include the Refugio Oil Spill, Thomas Fire and January 9 Debris Flow, Conception Boat Fire, several fires, including the Holiday Fire and Alisal Fire, numerous Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and other incidents. While the impact to the County and communities within the County from these incidents was significant, the COVID-19 pandemic is a novel event both because of its expansive geographic nature, as well as in length. It was not just regional. The pandemic was experienced by the whole of the County, State of California, United States (US), and global countries at nearly the same time, even as we continue with long-term response and recovery operations. The consequences of this novel event include, but are not limited to scarce resource competition, supply chain interruptions, limited to no mutual aid, increased demands on local and regional healthcare systems, and business interruptions. The County has been working to address these impacts since the first formal discussions between the County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and PHD occurred on February 6th, 2020, through the deactivation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on May 28, 2021 and ongoing with coordination of public health, medical, and economic recovery support outside of the formal EOC response structure.



**2,205**

COUNTY PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

**22**

DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED IN COVID-19 RESPONSE



**323**

PERSONNEL ENGAGED IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

**557,238+**

HOURS DEDICATED TO COVID-19 RESPONSE EFFORTS



**98**

COVID-19 PRESS CONFERENCES HELD BY THE COUNTY

**24,225,455+**  
POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED BY  
FOODBANK OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY



**765,242**

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TESTED FOR COVID-19

**90,632**  
CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19



*All data current through August 30, 2021 except for case data, which is current as of June 1, 2022.*

**It is important to note that while the County EOC remained active for a duration of 442 days, there were zero COVID-19 cases among responding personnel tied to the operation of the EOC.**

State and federal government policy and recommendations for public health protection changed at a rapid pace with little coordination with local governments. New guidelines were often announced with little to no advanced warning, operational guidance, or detail to support local governments in implementation. This further complicated processes related to disseminating information with unified messaging, responding to inquiries, adapting operations, and making enforcement determinations. Constant and significant changes to local Health Officer Orders, Governor stay at home orders, and personal protective measure recommendations or mandates necessitated the ability to quickly pivot the County's approach. Further, the distinction between "mandate" and "guidance" was often unclear, and conflicting recommendations or requirements across federal, state, and local governments were often identified.

This Report is crafted to review the County's response to COVID-19, including navigating through the aforementioned challenges. However, this Report also recognizes those challenges and constraints that are outside of the control of the County and indeed the whole OA that influence its response to COVID-19. As a result, this Report focuses on several aspects of the County's response, including the County's role in leading and coordinating the EOC, the coordination between the EOC and Public Health Department Operations Center (DOC), County essential services operational continuity, OA partner coordination, public information, and community and business recovery. This Report identifies strengths that the County should maintain and memorialize in future disaster response efforts, along with areas for improvement where the County should focus resources and efforts to enhance future response and recovery operations.

The following provides an overview of the primary strengths and priority areas for improvement for the County:

- **Strength: Dedication of Personnel.** The professionalism and dedication County's personnel and the personnel of OA partners cannot be overstated. These professionals remain dedicated to protecting life safety throughout the pandemic as response activities are ongoing. As detailed in this Report, the duration of the incident period and the required response is unprecedented both for the County and the nation. This response saw, and continues to see, County professionals continuously going above and beyond to meet the needs of the communities across the County.
- **Strength: Public Information.** Across the entire incident, the County was focused on providing information to the public to protect public health. These activities include, but are not limited to, providing training to County employees on press conferences and briefings; standing up a Call Center function to provide information to the public and support the vaccination mission; collaborating across County Departments to ensure outreach materials were available in English and Spanish; and executing more than 98 press briefings, the majority of which were in English and Spanish (data as of August 30, 2021).

- **Strength: Early Focus on Recovery.** As a result of the County’s past experience with significant disasters, the County was effective in activating cost recovery functions early in the incident to ensure robust cost capture in alignment State and federal recovery programs. Further, as the incident evolved and available funding streams became available, the County established additional working groups to ensure communication, collaboration, and prioritization within and across grant dollars.
- **Area for Improvement: Command and Control.** The County has leveraged the principles of Multi-Agency Coordination Systems (MACS) to support the response to COVID-19 and previous disaster and emergencies. As it applies specifically to COVID-19, varying command structures over the course of the response resulted in confusion, duplication of effort, and inefficiencies across the response. The County should formalize the use of MACS in plans, policies, and procedures to support more effective incident coordination and management. This is particularly important for those disasters or emergencies that require expertise and leadership outside of the OEM.
- **Area for Improvement: Revisions to County Code.** The County does not currently follow portions of Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the *Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances* as it is currently written. The County has leveraged alternate operational structures to support policy development and decision-making, often to great effect. The County should revisit and revise Chapter 12 to reflect the current needs of the County in response and recovery, including the roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority captured in current County Code.
- **Area for Improvement: Readiness.** Due to the frequency of disaster activities over the previous years, the County has not been able to spend more time on readiness activities, including executing meaningful updates to plans, offering training, and developing and delivering exercises. These readiness activities provide opportunities for enhanced collaboration and cross-Departmental engagement. As the County considers other investments, to include a web-based incident management software, the County should also consider developing a schedule to update the current suite of emergency management plans for the OA, including integration of the planning suite across County Departments.

This Report recognizes the collaboration of the County and partners from the State of California, PHD, the OA, the medical community, business owners, and residents from the onset of the incident to limit the introduction of new cases from outside of the County and limit the spread of COVID-19. Further, this Report recognizes the County has grown in capability, adopted new operational methods to meet the challenges of an unprecedented public health emergency, and continued to refine and adapt to best serve the needs of the public.

As of the date of publication (June 1, 2022) this Report recognizes the 688 individuals in the County who have lost their lives due to COVID-19, 90,632 who were infected by COVID-19, and the family and friends of those who were directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the EOC is no longer activated, this Report also recognizes that as of the date of publication the response to and recovery from the



COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. A second AAR/IP is being developed to focus specifically on the response operations of the PHD. This Report is being developed to provide the PHD with a more in-depth analysis of their operational response, recognizing that the PHD has separate authorities associated with health and medical determinations. As of the date of publication of this Report, the PHD DOC is still actively responding to COVID-19; as a result, the Department's AAR/IP will be completed at a later date to be determined.

Because the County EOC has demobilized and the County as a whole has transitioned to focus on economic and community recovery, this first AAR/IP has been completed. Completion at this time supports the County's improvement processes moving forward in a timely manner, allowing the County to integrate lessons learned into readiness activities. To comply with *California Code of Regulations § 2450 Reporting Requirements*, at date of publication, the County has completed and transmitted a copy of this Report to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

# Introduction

## Purpose

The purpose of the Report is to ensure the County reviews its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and identifies how the County may be able to improve response to future disasters to best serve the community. The Report has three areas of focus and emphasis.

- First, the Report focuses on assessing the County's response to COVID-19 by evaluating policies, plans, procedures, tools, staffing, and organizational structure.
- Second, the Report memorializes best practices and lessons learned throughout the incident.
- Third, the Report identifies and provides recommendations for improvement for future emergencies and any other disasters impacting the County.

## Approach

To review the County's response to COVID-19, there are two AAR/IP for consideration. This Report focuses on the Countywide response to the pandemic, including the coordination of response activities within the OA. Separately, an AAR/IP is being developed which focuses specifically on the response activities of the PHD.

This Report reviews several aspects of the County's response, including its role in leading and coordinating the EOC; coordination between the County EOC and PHD DOC; County essential services operational continuity; coordination of OA partners; public information coordination and dissemination; and community and business recovery.

The Report is, in part, informed by previous disaster AAR and IP and an extensive review of incident response documents prepared by stakeholders involved with COVID-19 response planning and operations. Materials reviewed include, but are not limited to, situation status reports, plans, policies, procedures, memoranda of understanding (MOU), schedules, educational and training materials, timelines, and emergency public information materials. Information collected and reviewed for this Report include all aspects of the County's and PHD's response through August 1, 2021. Information collected to date, as well as information related to the ongoing response, will contribute and inform the future AAR/IP for the PHD.

Guided by the review of relevant documentation, additional information was collected through seven one-on-one interviews with County and incident leadership; six facilitated group discussions; and additional conversations executed on an as-needed basis with internal and external partners to focus on and/or validate key concepts.

To obtain additional data and further explore topics identified during interviews and facilitated discussions, two web-based surveys were distributed to stakeholders. The first survey, sent to 250 individuals involved

in the County's EOC COVID-19 response, received 64 responses, resulting in a 26% response rate. The second survey, sent to 101 individuals specifically involved in the County's continuity of operations (COOP) throughout the COVID-19 response, received 32 responses, resulting in a 32% response rate.

## Event Summary

On Sunday, January 26, 2020, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in California, the third case in the US. By February 2020, the County PHD and OEM began reviewing Pandemic Response Plans and identifying continuity of governance (COG) concepts. On Wednesday, March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed a Proclamation of State of Emergency for California due to COVID-19, a novel coronavirus.

On Thursday, March 12, 2020, the County issued a Local Public Health Emergency Declaration, a Local Proclamation of Emergency, and activated the County EOC to Level 3. Three days later, on Sunday, March 15, 2020, the County confirmed its first local case of COVID-19, reported by the PHD. Within the next four days, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-29-20 on March 17, 2020, suspending some *Ralph M. Brown Act* (Brown Act) requirements allowing virtual meetings of public bodies and allowing for virtual Board of Supervisors meetings. On March 18, 2020, the County the transition of public services and daily operations to a fully remote or telework model. The Governor issued Executive Order N-33-20 on March 19, 2020 which executed a Statewide stay-at-home order that brought widespread closures of non-essential services. As of March 21, 2020, there were 13 reported cases of COVID-19 in the County.

The County began taking necessary precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19 and enhance the safety of its residents and staff, such as Health Officer Orders requiring individual, business, and government-based protective measures. To coordinate these efforts, the County initiated weekly legislative briefings of local elected officials and formed task forces and workgroups, such as the Homelessness Task Force, the Fiscal Expenditure Group, the Feeding Task Force, and the Senior & Vulnerable Populations Task Force. The County was proactive in providing comprehensive public information. In late February of 2020, the County launched a portal to provide a single hub of information anticipating extensive communication needs. This portal was later augmented with the introduction of the community data dashboard facilitated by the County Executive Office and philanthropic partners to address the growing need for data by the community. Additional efforts to support public information included daily press conferences on COVID-19 and independent websites launched by the Joint Information Center (JIC), including <https://publichealthsb.org/> focused on public health information and <https://recoverybc.org> focused on Community and Business Recovery.

On March 22, 2020, President Donald Trump issued a Major Disaster Declaration, “FEMA-4482-DR-CA – California COVID-19 Pandemic”, granting State, local, territorial, and tribal government entities, and certain private non-profit organizations, eligibility to apply for grant funding under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) Program. This Program provides reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred for certain disaster response activities.



On March 23, 2020, the County elevated its EOC to Level 1, the highest activation level. At that time, the County Incident Management Team (IMT) - 3 was activated as an Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) to support the County EOC and PHD DOC by providing training and mentoring staff new to emergency response roles. Shortly thereafter, the IMAT transitioned to an IMT and joined the PHD and County Executive Office in establishing the Unified Command (UC) structure to manage the incident by bringing in extensive expertise and skilled resources to the response operation and expanding capacity within the EOC to address the unknown nature of the incident in both in type and duration.

Actions were taken to proactively support vulnerable populations, such as launching Project Roomkey South for people experiencing homelessness, a partnership with Foodbank of Santa Barbara County to aid impacted community members, and multiple testing, isolation, and quarantine sites throughout the County. Additional workgroups were established, such as the Alternate Care Site (ACS) Fusion Team to assist with ACS identification and the Education and Enforcement Task Force who were responsible for educational outreach and response to violations of code and Health Officer Orders. A Call Center within the EOC was also quickly staffed to address questions and concerns from the public.



Throughout April and May of 2020, the Governor Executive Orders and guidelines issued provided direction on a variety of topics, including social distancing, limitations on gatherings, limitations on visitation at certain facilities (e.g., nursing homes), travel reduction, an increase in telework, school closures, and closure of non-essential businesses.

In efforts to provide resources and offer community businesses clarity on continuously evolving state and local guidance and mandates, the County established the Reopening in Safe Environment (RISE) Task Force and released the *Reopening in Safe Environment Guide* in May 2020.

In June 2020, the IMT was demobilized and UC of the EOC transitioned to the newly formed Joint Decision-Making Authority (JDA), comprised of leadership from the County Executive Office, OEM, and PHD, as well as the JDA Policy Group which also included County Counsel and the Board Chair (a full list of representatives is noted in Section 1.5).

By November 3, 2020, the County surpassed 10,000 COVID-19 cases and 129 deaths. On December 14, 2020, while the County reached its peak in cases, the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine were administered in California.

In January 2021, the PHD established its first Vaccination Point of Dispensing<sup>1</sup> (POD) sites and prepared for distribution. These efforts included engagement of the 2-1-1 Helpline and the reopening of the County’s EOC-based Call Center as a Vaccination Call Center, which was ultimately expanded due to heightened engagement. By the end of January 2021, Governor Newsom lifted both the regional and limited Stay at Home Orders for California.

Over the next few months, vaccination dispensing continued apace, and EOC demobilization planning efforts began. The EOC Vaccination Call Center was demobilized on May 26, 2021 as the County transitioned to community support being provided through the 2-1-1 Information Line and the State’s My Turn website and call center. On May 28, 2021 the PDH hosted its last mass vaccination POD and transitioned to smaller clinic locations and community-based pop-up sites. At the end of May in 2021, the County EOC transitioned back to a Level 3 to support the JIC, the demobilization process of all other EOC sections, and the ongoing documentation and reimbursement efforts of the County’s response.



<sup>1</sup> Point of Dispensing is a public health term often used to refer to sites where vaccinations or other prophylaxis are distributed on a limited or large scale. In addition to PODs, the County also used “Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center” to refer to these sites more clearly with the general public.

Blueprint for a Safer Economy

# California's Color-Coded County Tier System

Every county in California is assigned to a COVID-19 risk-level tier based on:

- **New cases:** The average number of new cases per day, over 7 days, per 100,000 residents
- **Positive tests:** The percentage of coronavirus tests given per day that are positive for COVID-19
- **Health Equity:** Although the Health Equity metric does not move a county to a more restrictive tier, meeting specified thresholds for a less restrictive tier can allow a county to progress to a less restrictive tier. Check out the thresholds for [progressing to a less restrictive tier via the Health Equity metric](#).

Tier Level	New Cases per 100,000*	Positive Tests
<b>Widespread</b> PURPLE	More than 10	More than 8% testing positivity rate
<b>Substantial</b> RED	4 to 10	5 - 8%
<b>Moderate</b> ORANGE	1 to 3.9	2 - 4.9%
<b>Minimal</b> YELLOW	Less than 1	Less than 2%

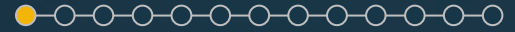
\* Case numbers are adjusted up or down based on testing volume above or below the state median.

On June 15, 2021, California fully reopened. The County entered the “Beyond the Blueprint” phase, signifying a return to usual operations with some State requirements and recommendations to remain in place through November 1, 2021, and potential local Health Officer Orders as needed to continue to reduce the spread of the virus.

While managing response, the County recognized the importance of concurrently beginning recovery efforts. Among the many recovery activities completed to date, the County’s Finance team gathered the necessary data to successfully initiate reimbursement processes upon the issue of guidance from FEMA.

While this incident is still ongoing as of the date of publication, the County continues to carefully monitor COVID-19 case rates while undertaking recovery efforts. Though the EOC is demobilized, efforts to support ongoing response and recovery continue through the PHD DOC and the associated JIC operating from the DOC; the ongoing activities on the JDA and JDA Policy Group; and continued tracking of response costs for reimbursement under FEMA PA and other eligible funding streams. It is important to acknowledge that while the response to the new variants, such as Omicron, resulted in the reactivation of specific and effective protocols to ensure timely and appropriate response to issues, that ongoing coordination and response is not included in the scope of this Report. The County remains vigilant in the face the potential for additional variants of COVID-19 emerging in the future.

# COVID-19 Timeline



# Event Timeline

JANUARY 30, 2020

- World Health Organization Declares Novel COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern

FEBRUARY 2, 2020

- President Donald Trump Declares a Public Health Emergency

MARCH 4, 2020

- Governor Newsom Signs a Proclamation of State of Emergency for California Due to COVID-19

MARCH 12, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Activates Emergency Operations Center to Level 3
- County of Santa Barbara Issues Health Officer Order for Social Distancing
- County of Santa Barbara Issues Local Emergency Proclamation
- County of Santa Barbara Issues Local Public Health Emergency Declaration
- County of Santa Barbara Initiates Weekly Legislative Briefings of Local Elected Officials

MARCH 16, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Forms Homelessness Task Force

JANUARY 31, 2020

- Health and Human Services Secretary Declares a Public Health Emergency

FEBRUARY 06, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Continuity of Operations Planning is Initiated

FEBRUARY 27, 2020

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Confirms COVID-19 Community Transmission in California

MARCH 11, 2020

- World Health Organization Declares COVID-19 a Global Pandemic

MARCH 15, 2020

- First Confirmed Positive Case of COVID-19 in County of Santa Barbara
- County of Santa Barbara Issues Health Officer Order for Lab Prioritization





# Event Timeline

MARCH 17, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Initiates Emergency Operations Center Human Resources Branch
- County of Santa Barbara Forms Recovery Team
- Governor Newsom Issues Executive Order N-29-20 Allowing for Virtual Brown Act Meetings
- Emergency Operations Center Establishes Feeding Task Force and Low Income / Senior Task Force

MARCH 19, 2020

- Governor Newsom Issues Executive Order N-33-20 for Stay-at-Home Order

MARCH 21, 2020

- Homeless Shelter at Santa Maria High School Opens

MARCH 23, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Escalates Emergency Operations Center Activation to the Highest Level
- County of Santa Barbara Activates Incident Management Assistance Team to Support County Emergency Operations Center and the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Operations Center
- Incident Management Assistance Teams Activates to Assist the Emergency Operations with Training and Mentoring Emergency Operations Center Staff
- County of Santa Barbara Employees Begin Donating Vacation Hours to Provide Other Employees COVID-19 Related Leave

MARCH 18, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Escalates Emergency Operations Center Activation to Level 2
- County of Santa Barbara Closes Offices
- County of Santa Barbara Education Office Closes Public Schools

MARCH 20, 2020

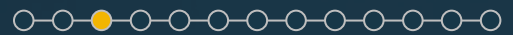
- County of Santa Barbara Provides Employees with Bank of 160 Paid Time Leave to Minimize Financial Impacts of COVID-19 Related Absences

MARCH 22, 2020

- President Donald Trump Declares Major Disaster Declaration FEMA-4482-DR-CA
- County of Santa Barbara Initiates Daily Press Conferences for COVID-19
- Joint Information Center Launches <https://recoveryshbc.org> for Community and Business Recovery Information
- County of Santa Barbara Posts Emergency Job Matching Program Forms and Starts Accepting Applications

MARCH 24, 2020

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Operations Center and County Emergency Operations Center Integrate and develop joint Emergency Action Plan



# Event Timeline

MARCH 27, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Posts Mutual Aid Form and Starts Accepting Applications
- County of Santa Barbara Establishes Code Enforcement Team

MARCH 31, 2020

- Sheriff’s Office Department Operations Center Activates
- Board of Supervisors Meetings Transitions to Virtual Format

APRIL 2, 2020

- California National Guard Assigns a Liaison Officer to Coordinate Foodbank Operations Support

APRIL 6, 2020

- Management of the Homeless Shelter at Santa Maria High School Transfers from County of Santa Barbara to Good Samaritan

APRIL 16, 2020

- Unified Command Receives Alternate Care Site Plan Presentation

MARCH 30, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Establishes Alternate Care Site Fusion Team

APRIL 1, 2020

- Family First Coronavirus Response Act HR6201 Provides Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion

APRIL 3, 2020

- County Signs Memorandum of Agreement with Foodbank of Santa Barbara to Provide Food Assistance to Impacted Community Members

APRIL 7, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Incident Management Team
- Incident Management Assistance Team Transitions to Incident Management Team and Takes Command of the Emergency Operations Center Forming the Unified Command Structure with the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and County Executive Office
- Board of Supervisors Approves Changes to Employment Terms and Conditions in Response to COVID-19



# Event Timeline

<p>APRIL 20, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Roomkey South Opens to Provide Non-Congregate Housing for People Experiencing Homelessness</li> </ul>	<p>APRIL 23, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County of Santa Barbara Emergency Operations Center Initiates Concurrent Emergency Planning Workshop</li> </ul>
<p>APRIL 28, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County of Santa Barbara Establishes Reopening in Safe Environment Task Force</li> </ul>	<p>MAY 5, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Public Health Department and County of Santa Barbara Open Community Testing Site in Santa Maria – Fairpark</li> </ul>
<p>MAY 7, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Department of Public Health and Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Open Community Testing Site in Santa Barbara - Earl Warren Fairgrounds</li> </ul>	<p>MAY 8, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Department of Public Health and Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Open Community Testing Site in Lompoc</li> </ul>
<p>MAY 18, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County of Santa Barbara Releases Reopening in Safe Environment Guide</li> </ul>	<p>MAY 26, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County of Santa Barbara Health Officer Ordinance 2020-10 Goes Into Effect Initiating Stay Well at Home and Face Coverings Mandate</li> <li>County of Santa Barbara Issues Guidance on Face Coverings</li> <li>Homeless Shelter at Santa Maria High School Officially Closes</li> </ul>
<p>JUNE 12, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County of Santa Barbara Health Officer Ordinance 2020-12 Initiates Phased Re-Opening</li> </ul>	

# Event Timeline

JUNE 15, 2020

- Incident Management Team Demobilized and Unified Command Transitions to Newly Formed Joint Decision-Making Authority

JULY 31, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Partners with American Red Cross to Run a Temporary Evacuation Point Field Exercise

AUGUST 26, 2020

- Public Call Management Transitions from the County Call Center to 2-1-1

AUGUST 31, 2020

- Governor Newsom Signs AB3088 Providing Protection Against Evictions
- County of Santa Barbara Joins Housing for the Harvest

JULY 14, 2020

- Board of Supervisors Approves Lease to Convert the Sears Building to an Alternate Care Site

JULY 28, 2020

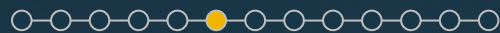
- Santa Barbara City Council Votes to Increase Public Health Education and Outreach on COVID-19 Countermeasures such as Signage, Compliance, Masking, Social Distancing etc.

AUGUST 3, 2020

- Project Roomkey Transitions from Emergency Operations Center to Ongoing Community Services Department Activity

AUGUST 28, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Decides Against Alternate Care Site at Sears Building, Sears Letter of Intent Expires
- Reopening in Safe Environment Ambassador Program Launches Providing Education to Local Businesses and Facilitating Public Compliance with Existing Health Officer Ordinances
- Reopening in Safe Environment Ambassadors Conduct First In-Person Business Outreach Efforts; Reopening in Safe Environment Email and Phone Line Set-Up for Business Support
- Governor Newsom Debuts the Blueprint for a Safer Economy; County of Santa Barbara Places in Purple Tier



# Event Timeline

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

- Governor Newsom Signs Bills SB-1159 and AB-685, Expanding Workers' Compensation Access and Ensuring Timely Notification of Workplace Cases of COVID-19

SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Advances to California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy Red Tier

OCTOBER 13, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Schools are Allowed to Reopen

NOVEMBER 3, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Surpasses 10,000 Cases and 129 Deaths

NOVEMBER 13, 2020

- State and Local Public Health Officials Discourage Traveling and Gatherings for the Holiday Season

SEPTEMBER 22, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Signs Agreement with 2-1-1 Helpline for Expanded COVID-19 Support

OCTOBER 6, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors Approves Amended Agreement with Foodbank of County of Santa Barbara
- California Department of Public Health Releases California Health Equity Metric

OCTOBER 30, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Establishes Mixteco Public Hotline to Overcome Cultural and Linguistic Gaps in Service to the Mixteco Community

NOVEMBER 10, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors Passes Ordinance to Adopt Remedies for Those Violating COVID-19 Health Orders
- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Partners with Legacy Works to Debut Community Data Dashboard on [www.publichealthsb.org](http://www.publichealthsb.org)



# Event Timeline

NOVEMBER 16, 2020

- Governor Newsom Announces Changes to California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy Program, Moving County of Santa Barbara to Purple Tier

NOVEMBER 20, 2020

- California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Releases Emergency Temporary Standards to Protect Workers from COVID-19

DECEMBER 6, 2020

- Regional Stay-At-Home Order Goes into Effect for County of Santa Barbara and Other Counties in the Region Due to Intensive Care Unit Capacities Declining Below 15%

DECEMBER 14, 2020

- The First Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine are Administered in California
- COVID-19 Cases Peak in County of Santa Barbara

DECEMBER 18, 2020

- Isla Vista Homeless Pallet House Temporary Housing Opens

NOVEMBER 19, 2020

- State Health Officer Issues a Limited Stay-At-Home Order for All Counties in California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy Purple Tier, Mandating that Non-Essential Activities and Work Stop Between 2200-0500 Daily

DECEMBER 3, 2020

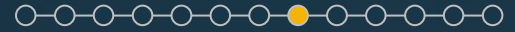
- Governor Newsom and California Department of Public Health Announce a Regional Stay-At-Home Order for Regions with Less than 15% Intensive Care Unit Capacity
- The Emergency Operations Center Initiates Recurring COVID-19 Partners Vaccination Planning Workshop

DECEMBER 8, 2020

- County Board of Supervisors Approves Amendment of County Code Chapter 2B to Permit Outdoor Dining Areas

DECEMBER 17, 2020

- County of Santa Barbara Receives 3,900 Initial Doses of the Pfizer Vaccine



# Event Timeline

JANUARY 1, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Testing Locations Transition to CenCal Health (Isla Vista was First Location)
- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Activates a Mobile Testing Option

JANUARY 6, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Vaccination Point of Dispensing Site Begins in Santa Maria at the Joseph Centeno Betteravia Government Administration Building

JANUARY 12, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Begins Providing Vaccination Point of Dispensing Operations to the Public
- County of Santa Barbara Establishes Vaccination Call Center

JANUARY 20, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Vaccination Point of Dispensing Site Begins at Allan Hancock College and Lompoc Veterans Memorial Building

JANUARY 22, 2021

- Reopening in Safe Environment  
Ambassadors Reassigned to Call Center Staff and Permanently Stop Conducting Field Outreach

JANUARY 5, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Vaccination Point of Dispensing Site Begins at Santa Barbara City College Wake Center

JANUARY 7, 2021

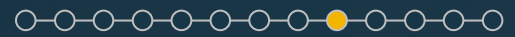
- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Vaccination Point of Dispensing Site Begins at Lompoc Veterans Hall

JANUARY 15, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Begins Vaccinations for People Aged 75+

JANUARY 21, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Vaccination Call Center Expands



# Event Timeline

JANUARY 25, 2021

- Governor Newsom Lifts both the Regional and Limited Stay at Home Orders for California

FEBURARY 3, 2021

- Federal Emergency Management Agency Issues a Press Release on 100% Federal Recovery Funding for Eligible Activities

FEBURARY 10, 2021

- Age Criteria for Entry into Project Roomkey South Changes from Individuals Aged 65+ to Individuals Aged 55+ with Underlying Health Conditions

FEBURARY 27, 2021

- J&J/Janssen One Dose Vaccine Receives Emergency Use Authorization from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Federal Drug Administration

JANUARY 26, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Issues Urgency Ordinance Temporarily Prohibiting Commercial Evictions

FEBRUARY 4, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Vaccination Point of Dispensing Site Begins at Dick Dewees Community Center

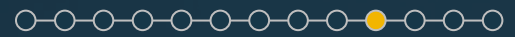
FEBRUARY 16, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Declares Individuals Aged 65+ Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine

MARCH 1, 2021

- California Department of Public Health Transfers Distribution of Vaccine to Blue Shield as the Third-Party Administrator





# Event Timeline

MARCH 3, 2021

- Governor Newsom Announces Federal Approval of Medicaid Funding Expanded for COVID-19 Testing for Low-Income Students

MARCH 5, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Announces Vaccination Appointments will be Released Every Monday at 9AM to Eligible Sectors: Emergency Services, Agriculture and Food Service, and any Remaining Phase 1A Health Care Workers

MARCH 17, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Transitions to California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy Red Tier

MARCH 23, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Vaccination Point of Dispensing Site Begins at Santa Barbara Hilton Beachfront Resort

MARCH 4, 2021

- Governor Newsom Signs Executive Order N-03-21 to Halt Mass Evictions

MARCH 15, 2021

- The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Declares Individuals Aged 16-64 with High-Risk Medical Conditions Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine

MARCH 19, 2021

- Governor Newsom Signs SB95, 2021 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Law

MARCH 24, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Expands Vaccination Eligibility to Individuals Aged 65+, Phase 1A Health Care Workers, Education and Childcare Workers, Emergency Service Workers, Food and Agriculture Workers, and People Aged 16-64 with High-Risk Medical Conditions



# Event Timeline

MARCH 29, 2021

- SB95, 2021 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Law Goes into Effect

APRIL 6, 2021

- Governor Newsom Announces Intent to Re-Open California's Economy and Remove its Blueprint for a Safer Economy Framework Effective June 15, 2021

APRIL 13, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Pauses Use and Distribution of the J&J/Janssen Vaccine Due to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Federal Drug Administration Recommendations and Safety Concerns

APRIL 1, 2021

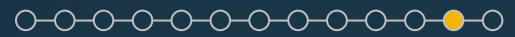
- The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Declares Individuals Ages 50+ Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine; County and Local Vaccination Points of Dispensing Start Registering Persons Aged 50+ for Vaccination Appointments

APRIL 9, 2021

- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Begins Phased Roll Out of My Turn For Vaccination Appointments

APRIL 15, 2021

- The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Declares Individuals Aged 16+ Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine



# Event Timeline

APRIL 19, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara and the Economic Development Collaborative Co-host Webinar on Business Resources Available Through the American Rescue Plan Act

APRIL 26, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Resumes Use and Distribution of J&J/Janssen Vaccine Following Updated California Department of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Federal Drug Administration Recommendations

MAY 4, 2021

- Senior and Low-Income Task Force Holds Last Meeting

MAY 13, 2021

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Releases New Guidance Stating Fully Vaccinated People Can Stop Wearing Masks and Social Distancing, Including Indoors

APRIL 21, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Transitions to California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy Orange Tier
- County of Santa Barbara Emergency Operations Center Demobilization Efforts Start

APRIL 28, 2021

- Project Roomkey South Site Completes Relocation to Another South County Hotel

MAY 10, 2021

- Pfizer's Emergency Use Authorization Expands to Include Adolescents Aged 12-15 Years

MAY 16, 2021

- The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Vaccination Point of Dispensing Site Begins at Santa Maria Fairpark



# Event Timeline

MAY 26, 2021

- Last Day of Vaccination Point of Dispensing Operations Occurs at Allan Hancock College

JUNE 9, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Transitions to California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy Yellow Tier

JUNE 15, 2021

- California Fully Re-Opens and County of Santa Barbara Fully Enters the Beyond the Blueprint Phase

JULY 12, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Holds Monthly Legislative Program Committee Meeting

JULY 30, 2021

- Last Day County of Santa Barbara Employees are Eligible to Use Paid Time Leave

MAY 28, 2021

- County of Santa Barbara Deactivates Emergency Operations Center Call Center
- County Emergency Operations Center Transitions to Remote Operations for Documentation and Cost Recovery
- The County of Santa Barbara Joint Information Center transitions to the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Operations Center

JUNE 11, 2021

- Governor Newsom Announces Executive Order N-07-21, Terminating the Stay at Home Order and California's Blueprint for Safer Economy

JUNE 17, 2021 - ONGOING

- California Occupational Safety and Health Administration Revises Emergency Temporary Standards to Protect Workers from COVID-19
- Ongoing Joint Decision-Making Authority and Joint Decision-Making Authority Policy Meetings
- Ongoing Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Operations Center Operations

# Findings and Analysis

This section presents the demonstrated strengths and observed opportunities for improvement in the response to and immediate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings presented acknowledge that while the County EOC is no longer activated for the response to COVID-19, response activities are still ongoing, primarily coordinated and supported by the PHD.

The findings and analysis associated with the Report have been organized into seven key areas based on **(1)** the areas of focus gained from facilitated discussions, and **(2)** the key themes that emerged associated with data collection across document review, interviews, and surveys. The seven key areas include: Overall, Emergency Operations Center Functions, Emergency Operations Center and Department Operations Center Coordination, OA Coordination, Public Information Management, Community and Business Recovery Coordination, and Continuity.

## Overall

Findings in this section are related to the County's overall response efforts or were present across multiple key areas. Within this section, recommendations are captured for both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that innovative practices and new resources are memorialized in plans, policies, and procedures to support future response operations.

## Strengths

### **1.1. County personnel alongside partners from the OA and volunteer groups collaborated effectively to meet the needs of the whole community.**

The duration of the incident period and the required response is unprecedented both for the County and the nation. While the County has experienced incidents with extended durations, an incident duration like that of the COVID-19 response will likely only be experienced again in the event of a catastrophic earthquake. The County EOC remained active for 442 days to support the response to COVID-19; by way of comparison, the EOC was active for a total of 43 days associated with the Thomas Fire and January 9 Debris Flow.

It is important to note that the EOC is only one function of the overall Countywide response and comprehensive operations necessary to address the myriad of emergency management challenges presented by the pandemic. These sites, managed by the PHD, include, but are not limited to:

- Public Health Department Operations Center
- Community Testing Site at Santa Maria Fairpark
- Community Testing Site in Santa Barbara – Earl Warren Showgrounds
- Community Testing Site in Lompoc
- Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center at Santa Barbara Community College Wake Campus

- Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center at Santa Maria Board of Supervisors Administration Building
- Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center at Lompoc Veterans Hall
- Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center at Allan Hancock College
- Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center at Dick DeWees Community Center
- Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center at Santa Barbara Hilton Beachfront Resort
- Community COVID-19 Vaccination Center at Santa Maria Fairpark

These sites are in addition to locations that supported isolation and quarantine operations across the County, as well as those specifically associated with Project Roomkey and an innovative pallet-based housing program targeted at protecting individuals experiencing homelessness.<sup>2</sup> These sites also do not include those groups, partnerships, and organizations that were formed to address specific incident impacts, such as RISE or other business recovery groups. Cumulatively, response activity across the County resulted in 557,238 hours<sup>3</sup> focused on the pandemic between January 2020 and August 2021. By contrast, the Thomas Fire and January 9 Debris Flow operation totaled 18,904 hours.

Consistently, those supporting the response across the County rose to the challenge to serve the community and perform different roles as needed. For instance, County personnel from the Probation Department assisted in transporting community members to isolation and quarantine locations and non-congregate shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness. Personnel recounted often working over 16 hours a day throughout the 20 months of response. In just one instance that highlights the dedication of County personnel, one team member recounted staying up until 3:30 a.m. working to ensure an individual experiencing homelessness was given the care they needed.

The needs of the community presented by the pandemic often required personnel to address these challenges outside of their daily roles and responsibilities. For instance, when the County stepped into high gear to support vaccination efforts, every single Department contributed staffing to Community COVID-19 Vaccination Centers or the County Vaccine Call Center. These and numerous other examples highlight the overall strength and dedication of personnel supporting the County's response.

**1.2. The County successfully transitioned many public services to be executed in a remote working environment and an online format.**

The County was able to ensure continuity of essential services during the pandemic, while ensuring protective measures for County staff and the public. This is particularly important given the considerations associated with incident duration and the economic impact of the pandemic, where certain activities, including those associated with permits and licensing, would have had an additional detrimental impact if suspended. In some cases, modifications to the methods of providing services resulted in enhancements

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.independent.com/multimedia/tiny-pallet-homes-to-house-homeless-underway-in-isla-vista/>

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the response is still ongoing and the total number of hours provided are only those hours recorded while the EOC was activated.

to the overall provision of services to individuals and households across the County. The County leveraged a variety of systems to support online operations and services, including:

- **Virtual process for Disaster Service Worker Oath:** leveraged by County Counsel to conduct swearing-in processes for volunteers and RISE Ambassadors remotely;
- **Expedited implementation of DocuSign:** leveraged for signing and executing official documents, including County Board of Supervisors Board Letters, and managing agreements remotely and electronically;
- **Widespread implementation of Zoom:** leveraged for hosting a variety of virtual meetings for official County business, including, but not limited to the County Board of Supervisors meetings, court proceedings, multiple social services support functions, permit review processes, and streaming press conferences remotely and securely; and
- **Enhancement of web-enabled services and County websites:** leveraged County websites to enhance information sharing, service adjustments, operational hour and contact methods, and move some in-person services to web enable platforms. Examples include:
  - Animal Services providing an online pet adoption process;
  - The Department of Social Services providing counseling/client care virtually;
  - The Superior Court California, County of Santa Barbara transitioning to virtual hearings (when appropriate); and The Office of the Public Defender leveraging virtual platforms to provide services.

Work from home operations were largely determined on a Department-by-Department basis. To support operational continuity, various information technology tools were deployed to assist County personnel to perform duties remotely. As this applies specifically to the response operation, while the County EOC continued to operate in person, the County also used multiple systems and platforms to support remote coordination to reduce the number of individuals in Center and allow for light workdays.

When asked “how effective was the use of different technologies for collaboration (e.g., Box, Smartsheet)?”, 73% of survey participants responded either “very effective” or “somewhat effective”. This strength is notable given that the County does not currently have an incident management software platform. Resources that were leveraged for operational continuity, response, and remote response operations include:

- **Box.com:** leveraged for sharing files to create accessible and collaborative content management workflows.
- **Smartsheet:** leveraged for data collection and information sharing related to assigning tasks, tracking project progress, managing calendars, sharing documents, and managing other work on a collaborative and accessible platform.

**Recommendation:** For sensitive Smartsheet and Box.com files, consider implementing a permissions system to grant or revoke access based on files and sheets shared. Consider whether the transition to Microsoft 365 will impact file sharing among County and OA stakeholders.

### **1.3. The State of California Executive Order N-29-20 offered flexibility to County leadership and the Board of Supervisors.**

Both the *Bagley Keene Open Meeting Act* and the *Ralph M. Brown Act* contain requirements associated with providing the public access to certain meetings of local government agencies. Typically, these requirements apply when a quorum of the Board of Supervisors (more than two) or a quorum of any Brown Act body are present at the same meeting or during the same discussion.

Executive Order N-29-20 (replaced by N-08-21) suspended certain requirements associated with the Brown Act, including restrictions on the venue required for meetings, requirements for advance notice of meetings, and the specific requirement that the public be present for all discussions where there were more than two members of the Board of Supervisors present. Additionally, Executive Order N-35-20 allowed for the Board of Supervisors to receive COVID-19 updates outside of public meetings in order to stay apprised on emergency operations and impacts to constituents. These proved to be of great benefit to the County and the County's response. These adjustments allowed the County to brief the Board of Supervisors and answer questions in a more timely and efficient manner in a virtual environment, providing for both health and safety protections and creating operational efficiencies. This also allowed for the County to host Legislative Committee conference calls to brief City Mayors, City Administrators, state and federal legislative representatives, and more than a quorum of County Board members at once to ensure timely dissemination of information, answer multiple agencies' questions, and facilitate consistency in operational awareness. Policy decisions and approvals were still executed during open, publicly accessible meetings of the Board of Supervisors, which ensured transparency while the County leveraged the flexibility afforded by Executive Order N-29-20.

Executive Order N-29-20 afforded these same flexibilities to all Brown Act bodies across the OA, allowing for County Committees, City Councils, Special District Broads, and other covered bodies to meet remotely.

**Recommendation:** Continue to provide community members enhanced accessibility to participate in Board of Supervisors meetings via virtual participation methods even after these Executive Orders expire and/or post-pandemic.

### **1.4. Task Forces, Committees, and Workgroups were invaluable to the County's response.**

MAC groups are an effective concept in the overall Incident Command System (ICS) which supports incident coordination. The County has previously used MAC group concepts to great effect, notably during the response to the Refugio Oil Spill when the County Oil Response Group concept was used to support the Local On-Scene Coordinator within UC. During the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, similar MAC groups were set up in the form of task forces, committees, and workgroups to facilitate coordination, decision-making, and in some cases conceptual implementation. Of particular note are:

- **COVID-19 Education and Enforcement Task Force:** Established in March 2020, this workgroup supported collaboration and ongoing coordination amongst various County Departments (including but not limited to OEM, Environmental Health Services, Sheriff, District Attorney, Parks, and Agricultural Commission) cities, and State agencies to address complaints. It also provided a



venue for candid conversations around the Health Officer Orders, including a forum to get clarification on specific items within Orders.

- **Fiscal Expenditure Group:** A committee established on August 10, 2020 to discuss the multiple ongoing and planned expenditures of key Departments, significant incoming grants, State and federal dollars, as well as the FEMA PA Program reimbursement process.
- **Homelessness Task Force:** A task force created to coordinate efforts to address the health and safety of the County's populations experiencing homelessness by partnering with local organizations and governmental agencies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among the homeless population.
- **Feeding Task Force:** A multi-agency group led by Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, created to coordinate emergency feeding efforts across the County. Participants include OEM, the PHD, American Red Cross, Southern Baptist Church, City of Carpinteria, City of Santa Maria Fire Department, and Community Long-Term Recovery Group.
- **Senior & Vulnerable Populations Task Force:** A MAC group created to assess the needs of senior and vulnerable populations due to the impacts of COVID-19, including any service interruptions to meal programs, transportation resources, and social and mental health services. Participants included the County Department of Social Services, Area Agency on Aging, PHD, Community Action Commission, Housing Authority of Santa Barbara County, City of Santa Barbara, City of Santa Maria, OEM, Foodbank, and Behavioral Wellness.

Of significance to these efforts was the inclusion and often leadership of the County's Community Based Organizations. These and other MAC groups promoted collaboration, candid conversations, clarifications, and in some cases levity during the stressful response.

**Recommendation:** Memorialize MAC activity and list involved groups to support decision-making and operations within the EOC. Pre-identify which groups should always be activated for specific risks. Additional best practices should be elevated to ensure key concepts are operationalized for future pandemic (or if applicable to other incident types) response and recovery operations.

### **1.5. The JDA was a beneficial transition in the Command Structure.**

While the PHD had previously led several response efforts associated with public health incidents within the County, including the H1N1 influenza outbreak in 2009 and the West Africa Ebola outbreak in 2014, it did not have significant previous experience leading within a MACS for such a significant event, which made collaborative response efforts difficult to effectively maintain.

Over the course of the pandemic, the County leveraged several different structures to support overall incident management command and control. These various structures were implemented and modified throughout the incident to bring all needed resources to the table and augment response concepts due to the uncertain and changing nature of the event (see 1.10 for additional information). On June 15, 2020, the County IMT – 3 transitioned out of the EOC, and the COVID-19 UC transitioned to the JDA. The structure was comprised of two groups: the JDA and the JDA Policy Group. This became the ongoing leadership structure and has been utilized for longest period of this event.

The JDA facilitates a collaborative environment for County leadership to operate in a cohesive and unified manner. The JDA includes the Assistant County Executive Officer of Health and Human Service Departments; assigned County Executive Office policy analysts; the Director of the OEM; the PHD Director; the County Health Officer; and liaisons from the County Fire Department, County Sheriff's Office, and other Departments, when needed. The JDA Policy Group additionally included the County Executive Officer; County Counsel; the two other Assistant County Executive Officers; and the Board Chair. Effectively, the JDA and JDA Policy Group operate as a MACS, allowing County agencies with disparate authorities and functional areas to work together to coordinate the overall response to the pandemic. The primary purpose and functions of the JDA are as follows:

- Provide a command system whereby all members of the JDA can coordinate an effective response, while at the same time allowing each to carry out their functional responsibilities.
- Provide a forum for all members to make consensual decisions and propose the policies and actions needed for protection of public health and safety. Proposed policies or significant decisions are brought to the County Director of Emergency Services through the JDA Policy Group, or to the Board of Supervisors when needed. This policy decision-making concept was applied with the exception of decisions on Health Officer Orders, which are within the sole discretion of the County Health Officer.
- Provide a structure to coordinate the development of a common set of incident objectives and strategies, share information, maximize the use of available resources, and enhance the efficiency of the individual response organizations.

MACS structures, such as the JDA, can be applied to future events where the subject matter expertise and legislative authority may lie within the purview of agencies that are not traditional public safety agencies, such as pandemic events, agricultural events, election incidents, or environmental events.

**Recommendation:** Memorialize specific leadership structures and concepts, which could include incident adaptive policies. Identify Department, division, and/or agency leaders for future incidents where the subject matter expertise and/or legislative authority required to support response is outside of the OEM.

**Recommendation:** Ensure documentation associated with all decision-making structures is maintained within EOC documentation platforms and transitioned or shared between leadership models as response continues to adapt to needs.

**Recommendation:** For long-term incidents, consider memorializing the concept of mid-incident evaluations within the leadership structure to allow the County to evaluate the response and course correct, as necessary.

## Areas for Improvement

### 1.6. The duration and nature of the incident resulted in employee burnout.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event in scope and duration. Employee burnout is a common result of large-scale emergency response, and the impact on employees of the County, OA

partners, volunteers, and contractors supporting ongoing response and recovery is significant. Most stakeholders engaged in the AAR process acknowledged the volume of work that was required to support response, with evidence cited of 16+ hour days during various phases of the incident; the lack of vacation or rotations for key personnel; and personnel supporting both their response role and their regular job duties for periods of more than several months, if not the entire duration of the incident. When asked about their role while activated in the EOC, **86%** of survey respondents (64 of 250 professionals) expressed that while assigned to the EOC, they felt responsible for both their traditional role and their EOC role. In some cases, burnout could be attributed to extraordinary efforts of personnel that did so voluntarily (e.g., deferring vacation time due to a sense of duty) and cited as evidence of those professionals doing what they needed to do to “get the job done” to protect the public.

Additionally, given the conditions of operating in a pandemic, many County employees working remotely felt isolated and disconnected from work and society, which further contributed to burnout. When asked to select the extent to which the duration of the incident impacted performance and personal wellbeing, **86%** of respondents said that they were either extremely burnt out or somewhat burnt out. The top three resources that respondents suggested would have reduced burnout were additional staffing, clarity of roles, and administrative support. Mental health support was also identified as a beneficial resource that could have alleviated some of these concerns.

**Recommendation:** Identify a current position within the EOC to focus on mental health support. Consider assigning responsibilities to the existing Safety Officer or a Human Resources Liaison. Ensure the position is equipped to provide referrals to EOC and other response personnel to mental health support, including third party providers, for current and future resources the County may secure.

**Recommendation:** Develop a procedure, applicable to all incident activations, associated with communication about available mental health resources within the EOC. Consider integrating into assigned position binder, to include frequency of outreach, such as during shift change/briefing schedules.

**Recommendation:** Consider continuing to utilize non-traditional mental health approaches, such as bringing emotional support dogs into the EOC, to bolster morale and support individuals contributing to the response operation.

### **1.7. Securing staffing proved challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The County experienced some similar and some new challenges associated with staffing to support response. There were multiple contributing factors, including:

- The County delayed and limited implementation of a requirement for Departmental reassignment of personnel to support the response operation. Assignment to the response was largely voluntary by Department and individual without invoking Disaster Service Worker status.
- The communicable nature of COVID-19 added unique complications to reassigning, hiring, and retaining workers. When asked about the concerns of contracting COVID-19, **56%** of survey respondents agreed that it complicated the process of securing staffing.

- Staffing was further complicated by the lack of pre-developed information on the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for response roles, and the logistical (training, work environment, etc.) requirements associated with the role the staff member would perform.
- In several instances, lack of internal Department communication between a Human Resource Leadership Team member, their Department head or employee supervisor, and the employee(s) being reassigned led to delays in matching and approving individuals for reassignment.
- The lack of scheduling software, or a single unified process, between Departments added a level of difficulty to scheduling.
- Personnel were reluctant to volunteer for specific duties due to concerns about or limited experience interacting with specific populations, such as populations experiencing homelessness.
- The County lacked an understanding of and guidance on re-assigning “special fund” employees.
- Some employees pushed back against reassignment for response functions and were often unwilling to help if it meant they could not work remotely.

Overall, the “bench” of available EOC staff was not deep enough, and staff backups were not well coordinated. Some EOC backups did not exist because the rosters in the EOC were outdated or lack of County Department commitment to provide staffing. Resources offered to provide response support via the FEMA, such as backfill assistance, were also not leveraged by the County, though this offering is unique to the COVID-19 incident.

**Recommendation:** Ensure all County employees know, recognize, and are ready to fulfill their roles as Disaster Service Workers. Reinforce the responsibilities of current County employees as Disaster Service Workers, including the potential for deployment to the EOC or field sites. Incorporate Disaster Service Worker concepts into all County job descriptions, as well as into hiring and on-boarding practices. Build a program that supports the readiness of Disaster Service Workers, including notice and no-notice activations in a real-world or exercise environment, to build skill while assessing readiness.

**Recommendation:** Implement training requirements for ICS, Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), and National Incident Management System (NIMS) training for all Disaster Service Workers in alignment with the County-NIMS Training Matrix for County Employees, EOC team members, budget officers, and Board of Supervisors. Identify and implement a centralized system for tracking the completed ICS and NIMS training certificates of Disaster Service Workers.

**Recommendation:** Clarify via policy to Departments and divisions the budget reimbursement process associated with Disaster Service Worker assignment to response operations.

**Recommendation:** Clarify via policy the capability to reassign special fund staff and the processes required to meet funding requirements.

**Recommendation:** Consider expanding Disaster Service Worker concepts, including fiscal support for special fund employees, within Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the *Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances* or within appropriate County Code regarding emergency expenditures.

**Recommendation:** Create and maintain a list of positions within the EOC matrixed to the County Departments that will staff those positions. Ensure County Departments understand the knowledge, skills, and capabilities required for those positions and support training, as appropriate. Ensure that County Departments assign a minimum of three staff per assigned position and support their participation in EOC trainings. Executive Managers shall be included in the assigned staff to EOC positions.

**Recommendation:** Identify personnel to support response operations in administrative roles, particularly for long-term response incidents, to support record keeping and other task-level assignments in collaboration with EOC Section leadership.

**Recommendation:** Identify and implement a single unified process or scheduling software to ensure the EOC and other field response units understand shift-based staffing available, alongside training needs and staffing gaps.

**Recommendation:** Consider establishing a no-cost, standby services contract to allow the County to access surge staffing support for emergency support functions in the event of another significant or catastrophic disaster. Structure the contract similar to the disaster cost recovery contract established by the County wherein the County will only incur costs upon contract activation.

#### **1.8. Health Officer Orders were challenging to enforce.**

Health Officer Orders are enforceable by law enforcement organizations, under *California Health and Safety Code Section 101029*. Additionally, the County passed Chapter 51 Enforcement of County Health Officer Orders Pertaining to COVID-19, Coronavirus Pandemic to the *County Code of Ordinances*, to expand enforcement authorization to other County Departments.

However, Health Officer Orders were difficult to enforce when mandates continued to change and there were conflicts in language between State and local guidance or orders. These incident complexities led to complications locally and nationally associated with enforcement. Additionally, it was difficult for non-traditional enforcement agencies identified to support enforcement of the County Health Officer Orders to be effective and feel safe while enforcing. In one such example, County Parks employees had to weigh enforcement options of the Health Officer Orders and their personal safety while a large group of parents was congregating to watch youth sports in a park during a time when gatherings were prohibited and youth sports could practice but not hold competitions. In another example, enforcing beach closures with varying requirements associated with beach use (beaches could be used for walking/swimming but not sitting/stopping) were challenging to enforce for the County and State parks personnel.

It is important to note that enforcement challenges were not unique to the County. It is also important to note that a Health Officer Order is not familiar to most of the population due to the lack of prior public health incidents at the scale and magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although protective health measures were difficult to enforce across the nation, the County responded with significant educational outreach and coordination efforts, including public information campaigns, the RISE Ambassador program, and the Education and Enforcement Task Force that were effective in both education and compliance – and in some cases providing a path to compliance (See 6.1).

**1.9. The lack of disaster purchasing policies, forms, processes, and training along with changes to command structures led to confusion regarding forms, authorities, and process.**

While the EOC engaged a Finance and Logistics Section early in the incident, there was still confusion regarding the process for ordering and approval of orders. The use of the Form 213, Resource Request Message, was not consistent throughout the incident. Further, the approval process for resource requests was not widely known or the request process changed due to operational changes in EOC leadership. Many involved in the response did not have previous experience or training on what are considered eligible and reasonable response costs, versus what may be considered day-to-day costs. As it applies to command structures, in some cases, the resource ordering process was not streamlined due to the lack of pre-identified cost thresholds for approval by the EOC and County leadership. In other cases, the reimbursement process was unclear to some, particularly as it applies to personnel staffed to support the response operation. This confusion resulted in questions to Human Resources versus the Finance Section or other appropriate County leadership.

It is important to note that there were separately managed Logistics and Finance Sections within both the EOC and PHD DOC. In the absence of a unified process and centralized ordering, in some cases there was duplication of effort and an absence of record keeping. Additionally, due to the continuity impacts to various Departments, resource ordering for protection of staff was unclear both in process, financial responsibility, and potential reimbursement options.

A new challenge for such a long incident was the use of standard Countywide service contracts. Challenges included but are not limited to how to ensure disaster-specific costs were tracked; multiple Departments using a contract; and the difficulty in tracking overall contract limits. It is important to note that the County Leadership Certificate Program made recommendations on how to standardize the disaster contract process and concepts for the development of a training program, which are under consideration. This includes concepts that can be implemented immediately and recommendations to be completed by identified individuals or Departments. This is still a work in progress due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

**Recommendation:** Develop a disaster purchasing manual that accounts for policies, forms (checklists and job aids), process, and thresholds for approval, including approval authorities of the OEM Director and County Executive Office senior leadership. This should include the issues identified above, as well as those identified in previous AAR and IP.

**Recommendation:** Provide training on the disaster purchasing manual. At a minimum, provide training to professionals assigned to the Logistics and Finance Sections. Incorporate the approval process into training for Section leadership. Develop a just-in-time training for individuals who may be new to the EOC.

**Recommendation:** Within the context of procuring an incident management software, establish a unified process for ordering. Ensure ordering is consolidated through the EOC.

**Recommendation:** Review the recommendations from the County Leadership Certificate Program associated with the disaster contract process and training. Affirm task assignments to the OEM and other responsible Departments and ensure integration within the EOC in alignment with ICS, SEMS, and NIMS.

#### 1.10. Numerous structural transitions, including UC, IMAT, and JDA led to inefficiencies and a lack of clarity on leadership and authority.

Throughout the incident, it was challenging to identify the internal command structure, including who had the authority to make decisions, and which processes were required and when. These structures, processes, and timelines included:

- **Standard EOC Leadership Structure:** The County EOC was activated on March 12, 2020, with the OEM Director managing day-to-day operations of the EOC and the PHD DOC operating at the Public Health Department facility.
- **Standard EOC Leadership Structure with IMAT Support:** The EOC Manager (OEM Director) signed an agreement with the County IMT – 3 to integrate IMAT representatives to provide training and support to four EOC Section Coordinators, the EOC OA Liaison, the Public Information Officer (PIO), and the EOC Manager. IMAT support began on March 23, 2020. On March 24, 2020, key PHD DOC staff transitioned to and integrated into the County EOC.
- **UC:** On April 7, 2020, the County Executive Officer signed a MOU with the County IMT – 3 to manage the County’s EOC in UC with representatives of County Fire, the Sheriff’s Office, the County’s Executive Office, and PHD.
- **JDA and JDA Policy Group:** On June 15, UC transitioned to the JDA which included the County Executive Office, PHD, and OEM, with the Policy Group also including the County Executive Officer, County Counsel, and the Assistant County Executive Officer responsible for recovery, the Board Chair, and other representatives when needed. At this same time, the County’s contract with the IMT - 3 was finalized and the IMT – 3 was demobilized. Additionally, the JDA went through a strategic pause as a mid-event re-evaluation to refine reporting structures and processes. See 1.15 for additional information specific to the JDA.

Although these various transitions in structure involved different levels of County leadership and levels of communication, there are multiple contributing factors to this finding, such as:

- The decision-making process changed with each command structure and was not always well communicated through all levels of staffing and response structures.
- Although some formal transition meetings occurred and a strategic pause for the JDA was conducted, these structures and processes were not always communicated through all of the various response groups and levels. Additionally, not all felt comfortable asking leadership for clarity on these transitions or how they impacted their individual processes.
- The documentation of each command groups’ decisions did not follow pre-established EOC documentation processes and in most cases were not saved to the incident document folder system for cost recovery purposes.
- In some cases, individuals would bypass procedures established by the JDA and/or within the EOC to receive approval for operational or administrative items.

By utilizing alternative organizational structures, there was a lack of clarity regarding which positions had approval for various EOC purchasing, contracting, and approval processes.

While individuals supporting the response and within the EOC may have known who was a part of command, as the command structures were transitioned the processes and structures developed with each command did not flow down to all involved or necessarily address all nuances of disaster operations. Further, processes previously trained and exercised specific to the EOC or leveraged during previous activations did not flow into and between these structures. Recommendations in 1.5 above also address some of these concerns.

**Recommendation:** Pre-identify approval and purchasing authorities for essential EOC positions and delegation of those authorities when alternative leadership structures are utilized (see associated recommendations in 1.5 above).

**1.11. The Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the *Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances* was not utilized as currently written.**

Chapter 12 of the *Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances* is focused on Emergency Management. This includes the roles and functions associated with the Director of Emergency Services, Director of Emergency Management, OEM, Disaster Council, and Recovery Advisory Council. The Disaster Council is intended to serve as an advisory body, active during response operations and at times when there is no active disaster. Per the County Code, the Disaster Council is charged to meet routinely, and during an emergency, the Disaster Council shall "... act as an advisory body to the director of emergency services in order to minimize the effects of the emergency by recommending or prioritizing response actions." Chapter 12 also includes a provision for a Recovery Advisory Council, which provides a similar support structure associated with policy and priorities to support the transition from response to recovery. It is important to note that within the Code the Recovery Advisory Council is an optional organization and there is no imperative for the County to convene the Recovery Advisory Council.

While the County did not specifically convene these groups to support response and recovery operations, the County did choose (and modify as needed) several other structures to support the response and recovery operation. Each of these structures were reviewed between the County Executive Officer and the Chair of the Board of Supervisors. The JDA was the longest standing structure leveraged by the County to support COVID-19 response activities and policies and continues to be leveraged by the County to support long-term recovery. This group functions as a type of MAC group by facilitating policy, objective, and strategy setting associated with the incident. This group also acted as a sort of Disaster Council by supporting executive-level decision-making and approval of significant expenditures or contracts by the Director of Emergency Services. From July 2020 through August 2021 there were also weekly and then bi-weekly COVID discussion meetings with all Department Directors, many of whom are named as Disaster Council and Recovery Advisory Council members. It is important to note that the JDA was not activated until June 15, 2020, and that other operational structures were leveraged prior to this activation to support coordination across the County.

The JDA is similar to structures previously used by the County to support coordination during response operations. Following the Refugio Oil Spill, the County developed and implemented a structure separate from the Disaster Council referred to as the County Oil Response Group. The County Oil Response Group provided input, guidance, and coordination to enhance operations across the County, including personnel



acting as the OA representative within the field-based UC prescribed by the *US Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) under Title 40 CFR Part 300*. Following the Thomas Fire and January 9 Debris Flow, command structures were leveraged effectively in the field and various MAC groups supported response at the OA level; however, the Disaster or Recovery Council was not activated. It is unknown when the last meeting of the Disaster Council was held or if and how it has been used during a response.

**Recommendation:** Revisit and revise Chapter 12 of the *Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances*. Include consideration for the roles memorialized in the County Code; the structure and composition of advisory and policy bodies established to support response and recovery; and requirements associated with activation of these bodies.

**Recommendation:** Consider formalizing within the context of recommendations associated with 1.5 MACS within Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the *Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances* to support MAC in the event of a future disaster not led by the OEM.

**Recommendation:** Formalize delegations of authority for the County Executive Officer (Director of Emergency Services) associated with decision-making and requisition authority.

**Recommendation:** Clarify the role of the Director of Emergency Management, including roles, responsibilities, and authorities before, during, and after declared emergencies.

#### **1.12. Greater multi-agency planning, including planning prior to the pandemic and advance planning during the incident, would have made a significant impact on response.**

Previous AARs developed for the County have acknowledged the need for pre-event planning to better support operations. While the County does have various response plans that applied to COVID-19, plans had not been updated in recent years, the EOC was unable to get copies of current plans, and/or the unique needs of the COVID-19 response necessitated the development of specific plans to address circumstances. One example is the development of ACS plans. It is important to note that the age of the County's planning suite is influenced, in part, by the frequency of EOC activations and the need for ongoing response coordination due to fires and other circumstances like PSPS.

The structural separation of the County EOC and the PHD DOC meant that planning was not fully integrated. In some cases, incident specific planning was developed by the OEC and not used by the DOC (e.g., traffic studies, staffing models), or existing/advance plans that could have supported the response were not developed or shared.

**Recommendation:** Develop a unified County inventory of planning products created to support the response to COVID-19, including plans developed by the EOC and PHD DOC. Collaboratively review planning products to support the revision and development of multi-agency plans which will support future public health incident response and recovery.

**Recommendation:** Evaluate current plans developed by the OEM to determine opportunities for improvement based on the lessons learned for COVID-19. Consider revising plans in alignment with the following topics:

- Proposed revisions to Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the *Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances*.
- Incident management roles and responsibilities.
- Multi-agency coordination structures.
- Logistics and resource management, including scarce resource allocation.
- Disaster cost recovery, finance, and administration.
- Long-term community recovery structures.
- Medical surge operations.
- Mutual aid.
- Emergency public information.
- Mass care and shelter operations, including non-congregate shelter structures.

**Recommendation:** Provide advance planning training to the Planning Section. Incorporate advance planning training within Section leadership training to ensure advance planning concepts are understood and that products developed within the Planning Section account for multi-agency needs and resources.

# Emergency Operations Center Functions

Upon activation, the EOC became the central coordination and support facility responsible for carrying out emergency management for the County's COVID-19 response. Those who were identified as key stakeholders in maintaining EOC functions include but are not limited to the OEM staff, EOC staff, County Executive Office staff, IMT – 3 staff, PHD staff, Agency Representatives (including Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters [VOAD], Foodbank, [Cal OES]), and Shelter Operations. Within this section, recommendations are captured for both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that innovative practices and new resources are memorialized in plans, policies, trainings, and procedures to support future response operations.

It is important to note that while the County EOC remained active for a duration of 442 days, there were zero COVID-19 cases among responding personnel tied to the operation of the EOC.

## Strengths

### **2.1. The County built upon strong Call Center organizational structure to provide support to the community across the incident, including for vaccination operations.**

During the Thomas Fire and January 9 Debris Flow, a County Call Center was run from a small Call Center and several offices, with multiple people sharing small spaces which were not accommodating to personnel. During this event and others since, a strong organizational structure for staffing, documentation, and reporting was developed, along with a flexible system of adding a limited number of additional call takers.

Because the Call Center foundation was already robust, the County was able to quickly and effectively activate the Call Center for COVID-19. However, this system was still based on limited lines, no true call center technology, and the use of multiple offices and spaces. To meet the needs of the public, General Services and the OEM implemented site hardware and equipment improvements to support expanded public information needs, including additional permanent phone lines to the building; a permanent communications/power trailer connection box; Call Center email accounts; a Call Center expansion toolkit for future disasters; a follow-up ticket process; and Call Center checklists and forms.

The Call Center was activated two separate times, at the start of the incident to support community information regarding COVID-19 and again in January of 2021 to support the registration process for mass vaccination operations. Throughout the response, the Call Center received a minimum of 50 to 100 calls per day with a peak call volume over 400 calls per day. At its peak volume, staffing was maximized to 22 call takers and up to three Call Center coordinators, incorporating County personnel and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers from all over the County. Call takers assisted with topics ranging from information regarding testing availability, isolation, enforcement, and vaccination operations. Specific to the vaccination operations, call takers provided information to confirm eligibility, made appointments, translated critical information, and referred callers for medical support. When the PHD established its first Vaccination POD in January 2021, Call Center staff were quickly re-engaged and provided training on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and several web-based registration

systems to support community members with their vaccine appointment registration process. Additional engagement of 2-1-1 Helpline supported the continuance of only one number being communicated to the public for all COVID-19 concerns.

*Table 1: County Call Center Staffing Statistics During COVID-19 Activations*

Highest Number of Operators on Shift	22
County Staff Reassigned	95
MRC Personnel Assigned	6
Non-County Mutual Aid Staff	5
Total Staffing	106

*Table 2: County Call Center Volume Statistics During COVID-19 Activations*

Total Calls: 2020	
March 12 through April 11, 2020	8,292 Calls
May 1 through August 21, 2020	
Total Calls: 2021	38,126 Calls
January 12 through May 28, 2021	
Total Calls for Spanish Speakers: 2021	6,472 Calls
Total Operational Days	235 Operational Days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2020: 106 Operational Days</li> <li>• 2021: 129 Operational Days</li> </ul>
Total Calls	46,418 Calls

Although additional permanent lines were added to the EOC, the physical Call Center space within the EOC only has four desks and with social distancing could only support two call takers. Therefore, to sustain the level of personnel, social distancing, and capacity necessary to support COVID-19 response required that the Call Center use multiple workspaces, including the Incident Management Room, Sheriff’s Command Trailer, and rental trailers. These resources may not be available in future events and/or have high costs associated with them. Investments into Call Center infrastructure have previously been identified as an area for improvement, both formally in the Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow AAR and more recently in the Conception Dive Boat incident.

**Recommendation:** Continue the County’s current project to build a new larger JIC and Call Center space to accommodate large response operations. Ensure the space is equipped with the appropriate technology, including sufficient telephone lines. The proposed Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center and Regional Fire Communications Center (expansion of the current EOC) is currently in design and is proposed to have 16 Call Center stations, which will meet the majority of the County’s previous (non-COVID-19) response needs.

**2.2. Cooperation within the EOC strengthened working relationships in day-to-day operations.**

While the County experienced staffing challenges across the response operation, the experience of County and partner personnel within the EOC was largely positive. Many expressed gratitude for and a sense of accomplishment from contributing to the response and supporting the community and noted that their work outside of the EOC improved from the experience. Others expressed that their experience in the EOC enhanced their understanding of its function and indicated that they did not anticipate they would feel as positive about their experience. Within emergency management, activations and opportunities for collaboration within the EOC often lead to increased capability among those professionals who are re-engaged in future response.

**Recommendation:** Engage new Departmental personnel in EOC Functional Exercises (FE) to support continued education, engagement, and collaboration among County partners.

**Recommendation:** Engage and train professionals who excelled in EOC functions during COVID-19 response activations for future disaster-specific activations and advanced exercises.

**2.3. County Risk Management wrote a COVID-19 Prevention Plan, Department Template Plans, and a Safety Plan for monitoring of all staff at the EOC.**

County Risk Management along with an internal Continuity Group that included Human Resources, County Counsel, County Executive Office leadership, the OEM, and General Services wrote multiple COVID-19 prevention and safety documents. These documents included a Countywide COVID-19 Prevention Plan in alignment with California Division of Occupational Safety and Health guidelines, a Department Prevention Plan template, and an EOC Safety Plan. The EOC Safety Plan included daily temperature and COVID-19 symptom screening, procedural mask requirements, and a process for reporting illness within the EOC. The Safety Plan also addressed the need for increased cleaning of the facility throughout the day. Risk Management identified personnel, including local volunteers and County lifeguards, to support safety screenings at the entrance of the EOC. These personnel rotated in shifts to ensure everyone entering was screened consistently and to eliminate the need for high touch sign-in surfaces. These measures and the others lead to no reportable transmission cases within the EOC.

**2.4. The County realized immense success with the use of Situation Status Reports in the absence of an incident management software system.**

The County has not had an incident management software system since the Refugio Oil Spill. Previous OEM leadership had concerns with the effectiveness of the incident management software solutions available on the market. As identified in 1.2, the County was able to identify and leverage various tools to support overall incident management and information sharing during activation of the EOC. Further,

Situation Status Reports developed within the EOC provided a singular, coordinated, and succinct resource in the absence of an incident management platform. As a result, these reports were used to organize and codify the most recent developments of various aspects related to COVID-19. Shared with partner agencies weekly, these reports provided situational awareness of validated information. When asked about the usefulness of Situation Status Reports, **93%** of respondents found the Situation Status Reports useful.

Situation Status Reports provide point in time awareness and are often integrated into incident management systems to support real-time incident management as facilitated by the software. This, in turn, supports greater integration within the EOC, and when applicable with external partners. Incident management software systems have varying capabilities. Many are aligned to the core elements of the NIMS, supporting overall incident management, planning, operations, logistics, and critical record retention. While the County was effective in using NIMS practices and alternative resources, leveraging a single incident management platform would further enhance all functions and mitigate issues during future response operations, such as those associated with file retention.

**Recommendation:** Identify and invest in an incident management software to support response coordination and collaboration. Ensure that all necessary stakeholders and Departments have access to and receive training on the incident management software. Evaluate whether DOCs should also integrate within the incident management software.

**Recommendation:** Ensure Situation Status Reports and other situational awareness tools are incorporated into the County's incident management software.

**Recommendation:** Within the incident management software or existing tools, maintain use of an Incident Tracking Log (Form 214) specific to individuals supporting the EOC to identify daily accomplishments, priorities for the next operational period, and political or other concerns to raise awareness.

**Recommendation:** Establish a file retention policy for incident response, including file saving policies associated with new virtual platforms being utilized for disaster response operations.

## **2.5. The IMAT was extremely successful in mentoring staff new to Planning and Intelligence roles.**

Many County employees supporting the EOC were new to their functions. At the request of the OEM Director, the IMAT provided support and mentorship within the EOC. This was specifically impactful in the Planning Section. IMAT personnel taught Planning Section staff how to develop the EOC Emergency Action Plans (EAPs), established the ongoing meeting schedule, and empowered staff to facilitate operational briefings. Additionally, some of the IMAT members facilitated the creation of an internal incident geographic information systems dashboard. All of their work in supporting the new EOC staff allowed for OEM staff to fulfill other critical roles.

## Areas for Improvement

### **2.6. Personnel assigned to the response were not always the personnel previously trained to support the EOC or were new to their roles, resulting in confusion regarding roles, responsibilities, and requirements.**

In some cases, personnel were not trained in the roles that they needed to assume prior to the incident and therefore received on the job training. Frequent changes in management structure furthered this confusion, especially for those who were learning their roles as the incident evolved. Additionally, new positions were created to meet the specific needs of this incident with no pre-developed concepts of roles and responsibilities. Authorities and scope of responsibilities for some positions were quickly established during the incident with those staff involved and the OEM.

Although this was a hurdle, there were some successes in this area. The Human Resources Liaison staff worked together to create their own checklists, scope of responsibilities, approval processes, and cross-training to support their new role as it evolved throughout the incident. An additional significant success was the Job Matching Portal that the County Department of Human Resources was able to implement. The Portal was available internally, as well as to other government agencies in County, as a skill matching system to help fulfill emergency response staffing needs (i.e., isolation and quarantine support, Call Center, vaccine operations, etc.), as well as provide government employees with hours when their normal duties were reduced due to COVID-19 protective actions. The portal won the 2020 California Association of Counties Challenge Award for Disaster and Emergency Response/Management. This had a positive impact in the EOC and PHD DOC by matching County and partner agency employees with response needs.

Once the Call Center closed in May, the OEM retained the Call Center Coordinators to document Call Center resources that were developed during incident and to create a position binder and forms for future incidents. Further, it is also important to note the OEM is in the process of creating position-specific binders for the 48 EOC positions. The creation of these binders will swiftly provide personnel with clarity and written material for reference if needed.

**Recommendation:** Finalize position-specific binders to support all 48 positions within the EOC. Prioritize development of binders for critical positions and/or positions where the County has previously experienced challenges associated with staffing. Ensure binders are provided in electronic and paper format to support COOP and reference for each position.

**Recommendation:** Develop just-in-time training for EOC staff positions so that new staff can be trained quickly on roles they do not typically perform or had not previously staffed within the EOC. Prioritize development training for critical positions and/or positions where the County has previously experienced challenges associated with staffing.

**Recommendation:** Consider establishing an annual training for the Planning Section in order to support ongoing capability development. Consider executing this training in alignment with personnel designated to support the Planning Section within DOCs.

**Recommendation:** Evaluate and revised the County’s Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan. Considerations should include the tempo for EOC position-specific training (quarterly or biannually); training to support redundancy within County Departments by rotating multiple individuals through position-specific training; and considerations for Disaster Service Worker training to include ICS/SEMS required training.

**2.7. The County designated a Call Center Liaison; however, in implementation this role was not dedicated only to Call Center functions.**

The Call Center is a critical resource for public information across the County, ensuring information is disseminated in a timely fashion and that the needs of individuals and households are met during emergency response. A single, dedicated Call Center Liaison would have been a beneficial addition to the EOC, ensuring seamless communication between the JIC and the call operators. As operationalized during the COVID-19 response, this role was not entirely dedicated to or assigned as the Call Center Liaison without additional roles and responsibilities. These additional roles and responsibilities frequently distracted the Call Center Liaison from relaying important information to all call operators in a timely fashion or being available to respond to questions. Although the Call Center Coordinators helped to fill this gap, it was not effective as it could have been.

**Recommendation:** Dedicate a Call Center Liaison to the Call Center in future activations of the EOC. Provide training to individuals who may serve as Call Center Liaisons to build redundancy.

**2.8. The County did not have a traditional shift-change process in the EOC as the COVID-19 response was not a 24/7 operation, resulting in communication gaps.**

While the County did not need to operate a 24/7 EOC, the traditional structures associated with such operations are beneficial for response processes. Due to staffing issues and constraints, County and partner agency staff fulfilling various EOC positions varied from day to day, sometimes without notice, resulting in gaps in operational awareness within the EOC during the next shift. Further, it was not always known whether assigned staff were going on a rotation, out for COVID or other medical reasons, or being entirely reassigned from EOC duties. To combat this issue, a Daily Briefing Form was created for each position to use, and a morning and evening briefing was conducted to share information from shift to shift. However, this process was not maintained or reinforced by various management structures. A shift change process, including a briefing tempo at the beginning and end of operational shifts, can help provide orientation to new professionals, ensure key issues are captured to be addressed the next day, and facilitate a process for mental health checks within the EOC.

**Recommendation:** Ensure an operational tempo is established in the EOC, to include a debriefing process and considerations for mental health. Memorialize the Daily Briefing Form for non-24/7 activations and establish the operational tempo associated with shift durations to ensure consistency across incident types (e.g., 8-hour, 12-hour, 24-hour).

**Recommendation:** Develop a protocol to ensure EOC leadership is aware of when assigned staff are being demobilized and what new staff are assigned.



# Emergency Operations Center/Department Operations Center Coordination

Throughout the incident, the majority of the actions taken required coordination and cooperation between the EOC and PHD DOC. Those who were identified as key stakeholders in EOC and PHD DOC Coordination include but are not limited to EOC Staff, PHD DOC Staff, Finance, Purchasing, Logistics, ACS Force, Isolation and Quarantine, and IMAT. Within this section, recommendations are captured for both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that innovative practices and new resources are memorialized in plans, policies, trainings, and procedures to support future response operations.

## Strengths

### **3.1. The Finance Workgroup contributed to EOC and PHD DOC coordination and communication successes.**

Issues associated with overall cost recovery tracking and duplication of efforts were greatly reduced when the County established a Finance Workgroup. The workgroup provided a platform for cross-County collaboration and focused efforts to streamline financial processes.

### **3.2. The PHD served as a critical technical staff contributor to the operations and staffing of the Call Center team within the EOC.**

The PHD served as a critical contributor to the Call Center from both a staffing and operations perspective. For instance, nurses provided via the PHD supported the Call Center, providing subject matter expertise and, in some cases, taking calls directly. Further, training was provided to call takers on the various vaccine appointment registration systems, as well as HIPAA training, which allowed the Call Center to enhance their customer service offerings once vaccinations became available. The PHD also created an online ticketing form that call center operators could complete for requests for more technical information. This provided structure for the Call Center to receive and track these requests, allowing the Call Center Liaison to then work with the PHD to identify responses and/or respond directly.

## Areas for Improvement

### **3.3. The transition from the PHD DOC into the EOC was inefficient, unclear, and uncoordinated.**

Within overall emergency management, a DOC exists to support the coordination of resources and activities specific to a single Department or agency. Historically, the PHD DOC has been able to independently address the response to public health incidents, as was the case with the H1N1 and 2014 Ebola outbreaks. The County has not previously needed to escalate operations for a public health incident from within a DOC to the EOC in order to support a more significant health incident. Transitioning from the DOC to the EOC, with the PHD fulfilling a central leadership role, can provide a greater support structure for the significance of this event (in terms of geography, fiscal impact, and length), while facilitating the broader inter-agency and inter-Departmental coordination required to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coordination challenges existed prior to the PHD DOC transition to the EOC. In part, these challenges existed due to a lack of clarified roles and responsibilities associated with each operational structure operating independently, communication challenges between the two, and clear delineation on when escalation from PHD Departmental operations to broader County coordination should occur. When the transition occurred from overall incident coordination within the PHD DOC to the EOC it was perceived to have occurred with relatively short notice and limited communications from within all leadership structures. Additionally, there were no predeveloped processes or protocols for how to integrate a DOC into an EOC. This resulted in confusion among personnel. When asked about the process for integrating the PHD DOC into the EOC, **74%** of survey respondents expressed that the process was confusing and lacked ample advance notice.

Once the transition from the PHD DOC to the EOC occurred, concurrent efforts associated with incident coordination continued at both facilities, facilitating the ongoing lack of clarity with roles, responsibilities, and leadership. This was compounded by a lack of unified systems to support operations across the whole County, such as incident management software. Additionally, PHD DOC staff were unfamiliar with how to integrate into the EOC and felt that they were more effective with their own systems in the DOC. Pre-event planning and training focused on how either the PHD DOC or EOC would support a public health emergency but did not identify or test how they would work together or integrate. Therefore, all lacked an understanding of how to move forward when greater coordination was needed. It is important to note that without established procedures and protocols, the transition from a DOC to an EOC would likely have had challenges regardless of the type of DOC or incident.

**Recommendation:** Establish thresholds that are applicable to all incidents for when there should be a transition from a DOC to the EOC. Include potential unified management structures and systems for those incidents in which a specific Department has a legal authority for response (see 1.5 and 1.10). Incorporate incident thresholds into appropriate emergency operations plans at the Departmental and County levels.

**Recommendation:** Incorporate scenarios into the County's Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan that include both the DOC and the EOC, including the transition of incident coordination.

**Recommendation:** Implement a uniform electronic inventory management system in collaboration with establishing an incident management software to support cross-Department management of County resources. Ensure systems and associated procedures include instances where the DOC, Incident Command Post (ICP), and/or the EOC are activated at the same time.

**Recommendation:** Provide training on systems and forms, including the 213, at the beginning of the activation of any DOC in a just-in-time format to ensure a common understanding of information management and sharing practices.

### **3.4. Liaison Staff in the EOC and PHD DOC did not effectively integrate.**

Although the County's integration of liaisons into the EOC and PHD DOC was a practical idea, it did not work in practice for multiple reasons. The EOC Liaison within the PHD DOC was not well-received by the DOC, nor was the individual fully integrated into meetings and coordination efforts. The incorporation of the PHD DOC Liaison into the EOC was resisted before ultimately improving, but only after significant

strife. The IMAT added a liaison to the PHD DOC without coordination or knowledge of the EOC, compounding the lack of clear communication and coordination structures.

**Recommendation:** In collaboration with multi-agency partners, develop an all-hazard unified liaison toolkit to support integration of liaisons into DOC and EOCs.

**Recommendation:** Review and update current DOC plans, policies, and procedures to support effective integration of EOC Liaisons.

**Recommendation:** Include OEM personnel and outside agency liaisons during DOC activations and/or exercises.

# Operational Area Coordination

The coordination and communication of information, key decisions, resources, and the provision of services throughout the entire OA was a major component to COVID-19 response. As noted throughout this Report, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was comprehensive to the whole County and had a true impact on all jurisdictions within the OA. As such, stakeholders engaged throughout the response included city and special district representatives, utilities and critical infrastructure, non-profit and community-based organizations, Vandenberg Space Force Base, the University of California Santa Barbara, Isla Vista Community Services District, Lompoc Federal Prison, elected representatives, and Cal OES, among others. Within this section, recommendations are captured for both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that innovative practices and new resources are memorialized in plans, policies, trainings, and procedures to support future response operations.

## Strengths

### **4.1. The County utilized the EOC OA Liaison email address to streamline communication efforts with partner agencies.**

As activated during the response to COVID-19, the OA Liaison provided an efficient, singular point of coordination between OA partners and the EOC. The position specific email address provided a clear path for all partners to request and receive information. When asked how effective the EOC OA Liaison email was in providing and receiving information **87%** of respondents indicated that it was somewhat or very effective. Additionally, later in the response, the OEM created a Smartsheet for jurisdictions to submit questions to the EOC and PHD DOC. Utilizing the Smartsheet for centralized questions and answers allowed for other jurisdictions with similar questions to see responses as provided and reduce duplication of requests for information to the County.

### **4.2. OA partners demonstrated meaningful cooperation and worked closely with partners with whom they did not traditionally interact.**

When asked to select the option that most accurately described cooperation and collaboration with OA partners during COVID-19, **65%** of survey respondents stated that they worked closer with OA partners during COVID-19 than during previous incidents. OA coordination and engagement has previously been a challenge for the County. In previous incidents, the County did not always establish an OA Liaison to support coordination in the EOC or dedicated support for this position was not possible due to the constraints associated with staffing and response operational structures.

The County has made investments in building relationships with OA partners, which benefited the response to COVID-19. These investments have been made in recent years by engaging a more diverse group of partners in two-way conversations regarding planning, training, policy discussions, community education, and other readiness activities and during response coordination. The impact of these investments is evident. In one example, when the County faced challenges with volunteer management registration, through enhanced coordination and collaboration the City of Santa Barbara seamlessly stepped in to assist and provide support. The City of Santa Barbara has active volunteer management

functions via their local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) whose support and expertise were leveraged. The County should continue to invest in OA coordination and collaboration, including ensuring dedicated staffing and training to support the OA Liaison function.

## Areas for Improvement

### **4.3. Throughout the response there were different communication methods established for various processes which led to a lack of clarity on which contact person and method should be used and when.**

While functions such as the EOC OA Liaison supported enhanced communication and collaboration across the OA, there were still opportunities to improve information sharing and distribution. Partners noted that it would have been helpful to develop a “cheat sheet” pointing to contacts for each type of Public Health inquiry and a resolution point of contact. However, the purpose of the OA Liaison is to serve as a single point of entry, allowing for coordination within the EOC and, as necessary, to County Departments, to include the PHD. Should this single position not be able to address the needs of the OA, the liaison function is flexible to add additional liaison positions or deputies to support increased demand.

Additionally, as noted above, the County EOC was able to develop the OA inquiry Smartsheet form to track information and resource needs and share responses with the whole OA.

**Recommendation:** Memorialize the Smartsheet developed to coordinate across the OA in order to ensure it is integrated into future response operations. Ensure questions and responses are shared broadly with partners to limit duplicative requests for information.

**Recommendation:** Explore opportunities to extend the County-purchased and maintained incident management software across the whole County, including to OA partners.

### **4.4. The County does not have a volunteer management plan or system, which presented coordination challenges.**

It was earlier noted that the City of Santa Barbara ultimately stepped in to support the County with volunteer registration and management. While this is a strength, the County does not have a volunteer management function, plan, or software. Partners, such as VOAD, are equipped to coordinate across multiple voluntary organizations rather than directly with individual volunteers or pop-up volunteer groups. During the response to COVID-19, VOAD partners responded to the EOC and assisted with situational awareness and collaboration with its current member organizations. However, VOAD had limited resources and tools pre-identified to facilitate greater coordination of new associations or spontaneous volunteers. It is important to note that the development of a volunteer management plan has been an outstanding recommendation since the Refugio Oil Spill After-Action Report was finalized in 2016.

**Recommendation:** Develop a volunteer management plan to support the future use of volunteers to support the County’s response operations, including exploring the potential to formalize the City of Santa Barbara’s support of this function in all future disasters. Leverage pre-existing County Departmental plans, such as those developed and leveraged by Animal Services, to capitalize on already established best practices and ensure integration.

**Recommendation:** Collaborate with VOAD to clarify and memorialize specific roles and responsibilities within the EOC. Develop a position-specific binder and training to support VOAD representatives within the EOC.

**4.5. Some volunteer opportunities required registration fees, which resulted in miscommunication.**

The pandemic presented significant staffing challenges for the County. The County leveraged support from the MRC to great effect to help address some of these challenges. The MRC is a network of volunteers created by the US Department of Health and Human Services who volunteer their time and expertise to support response and include professionals with medical and public health backgrounds. MRC units at the local level support integration into response. However, registration with the MRC has an associated cost for background checks. These expenses should have been incurred as an incident response cost and fully reimbursed.

**Recommendation:** Develop a policy to specify the requirements for and process associated with onboarding volunteers and reimbursement of volunteer costs during an incident or disaster. This should include costs associated with required registrations and, as applicable, training.

**4.6. The County was unable to successfully leverage some offers for support from private-sector partners.**

There were multiple proposals from the private sector to offer the County innovative support. The County was able to take advantage of several offers for support, including partnering with a non-profit partner to develop data visualization dashboards; support from an additional non-profit partner for technical assistance, supplies, and warehousing operations; and direct engagement via MOU with the United Way to assist with rental assistance support.

Within the context of the COVID-19 response, private industry offered both capacity and expertise not organically held by the County. Many offers were for new technologies or products intended to address COVID-19 specific health concerns. Some new products, such as associated with personal protective equipment or decontamination, would have required approval from federal agencies and therefore could not be leveraged by the County. In other cases, the additional offers for support were unable to be leveraged by the County as there was no defined process to review them to ensure they were legitimate and resources to review, early in the incident, were constrained. It is also important to note that the County does not currently have a function or position to support public-private sector coordination or donations management within the EOC, which may have provided a clear mechanism for the County to vet some offers for assistance and support.

**Recommendation:** Develop a process to review, vet, respond to, and track offers and proposals for private sector aid.

**Recommendation:** Consider adding a Public-Private Liaison position within the EOC.

**Recommendation:** Consider establishing contracts or MOU to support coordination and management of donated or volunteer resources from the private sector into the response operation.

#### **4.7. Roles, responsibilities, and mutual aid concepts continued to pose challenges throughout the incident due to the lack of clarity in the OA agreement.**

The County needs to ensure it has the appropriate documentation with local governmental jurisdictions which identifies the County as the OA Coordinator and therefore confirm its authorities. The OA Agreement should also be revised to clarify mutual aid and resource coordination concepts while identifying the responsibilities and authorities of the respective organizations, to include the County as the OA Coordinator, the County as a unit of government, and local government jurisdictions (cities, special districts, and others as appropriate.)

**Recommendation:** Develop training for OA partners on mutual aid and their roles and responsibilities under the OA as independent government entities.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that the County has the appropriate documentation with local government jurisdictions that identify the County as the OA Coordinator and the associated authorities. Ensure associated MOU address mutual aid needs to support the OA EOC and other response structures.

#### **4.8. Coordination and protection of populations experiencing homelessness from COVID-19 was challenging.**

At the beginning of COVID-19 there was an immediate need (within 12 hours of EOC activation) to provide additional services to populations experiencing homelessness due to an excessive cold weather warning and the County's Cold Weather Shelter provider refusing to open due to COVID-19 safety concerns. The County quickly initiated opening a temporary Cold Weather Homeless Shelter at Santa Maria High School. This effort was extremely difficult as the County lacked experience in direct operation of homeless shelters, employee and volunteer misperceptions or hesitations to serve this population, and a missed opportunity for greater coordination with the City of Santa Maria to attain additional support.

Additionally, during this time, the State of California issued a directive to not disturb homeless encampments to support COVID-19 protective measures and the US CDC issued guidance to increase social distancing within congregate shelters, effectively reducing the capacity of all homeless shelters. All of these concepts contributed to reactive program development and limited timelines to strategically plan out all of the intricacies associated with providing significantly enhanced services.

The County was able to overcome these issues while establishing a best practice for future response operations. A multi-discipline and multi-agency COVID-19 Homelessness Task Force was created significantly into the event timeline to address public safety issues that had developed overtime within the homeless encampments. The Task Force was highly effective at addressing issues and providing support for populations experiencing homelessness. This Task Force could have been a significant support mechanism to the County's efforts if started sooner, and should be implemented for all future events to proactively address support to populations experiencing homelessness

**Recommendation:** Memorialize the Homelessness Task Force, including considerations for participating agencies and scope of responsibility. Engage the Homelessness Task Force in the decision-making

process as to whether the EOC will be activated for any incident and ensure the Task Force is engaged throughout the activation.

**4.9. Efforts to provide services to individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs can be improved.**

Overall, the County worked collaboratively with OA partners to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. In some cases, issues were faced by organizations and services providers which were not identified and shared with the EOC or OEM staff until the after-action process. During this Report development process, it was noted by services providers that there were challenges in coordinating transport for individuals who use wheelchairs to vaccination sites. Unfortunately, if this challenge had been identified to the OA EOC Liaison, the EOC could have worked to address these transportation needs through coordination with 2-1-1 and local transportation service providers for access, disability, and functional needs populations. More proactive outreach and coordination with access, disability, and functional needs service providers could enhance this coordination.

**Recommendation:** Incorporate and activate an Access, Disability, and Functional Needs Liaison position into the EOC for all activations to ensure consideration of access, disability, and functional needs and to provide OA partners a Liaison to support issue escalation.



# Public Information Management

The management of accurate, timely, and coordinated public information contributed to the successful operations of the County and the dissemination of potentially life-saving information to its residents, especially considering the unprecedented nature of COVID-19. Those who were identified as key stakeholders in Public Information Management include but are not limited to county PIOs, Joint Information System Staff, OA PIOs, County 2-1-1, Call Center Managers, and Community Based Organizations for cultural outreach. Within this section, recommendations are captured for both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that innovative practices and new resources are memorialized in plans, policies, training, and procedures to support future response operations.

## Strengths

### **5.1. Web-based information sharing tools and resources were valuable in supporting response efforts and the impacted community.**

The County has previously used ReadySBC.org to great impact for incident communications, including sharing real-time incident maps, safety and information updates, as well as community recovery resources. For this incident, it was determined that new websites were needed to support community information. The County realized immense success with its web presence and expanded resources, to include PublicHealthSBC.org, RecoverySBC.org, and the Community Data Dashboard. These resources were valuable for the general public and were noted by response stakeholders as valuable for the response operation.

Due to the length of the incident and the need to establish PHD as a trusted leader, the establishment of PublicHealthSBC.org as an authoritative source for public health information, guidance, and community statistics is a best practice on the part of the County. For the majority of incidents that may impact the County, ReadySBC.org will continue to be the go-to website for incident information. The County should consider establishing similar websites to PublicHealthSBC.org for future incidents that may have significant extended duration or in which very Department-specific subject matter expertise is provided to the public.

While the Community Data Dashboard was effective resource for sharing information specific to the incident, it was developed by an outside partner. On one hand, the development of the dashboard demonstrates the County's strength of public-private partnerships. On the other hand, once this site was established, the County was required to engage the partner and pay for ongoing maintenance and support. EOC Geographic Information Systems (GIS) personnel were engaged to provide support and the PHD trained additional professionals to provide support.

It is important to note the County is in the process of integrating readiness, response, and recovery information into one URL - ReadySBC.org - with tabs for each (ReadySBC.org/Preparedness, ReadySBC.org/Response, and ReadySBC.org/Recovery) to ensure information across all three phases is consistent and appropriate.

**Recommendation:** Document workflow processes within the JIC to support coordination of incident information to the public for future incidents to ensure a unified message, especially when information is provided across multiple websites.

**Recommendation:** Continue using ReadySBC.org as the authoritative source of incident information for all incidents OEM staff are supporting or when the EOC is activated. As appropriate, in future incidents, leverage ReadySBC, social media, and other resources to share emergency public information. Integrate Department-specific resources into emergency public information concepts where the OEM is not the lead agency or subject matter expert. Pre-identify content concepts that are pertinent to every event so updates can be made quickly and easily.

**Recommendation:** Create an on-call list of county staff trained in the new county website platform to support incident webpage management. Train those individuals on Joint Information Systems and responding to the JIC.

**Recommendation:** Evaluate how to present incident data through County resources (e.g., ESRI, SmartSheet, etc.) on the incident website.

## **5.2. PIOs, media spokespersons, and other JIC positions were quickly trained on the job as needs arose.**

The County has limited trained PIOs or individuals trained to fulfill JIC positions or to act as media spokespersons on staff. And majority of those who are trained are not subject matter experts in public health or epidemiology. Additionally, there are limited County staff with the ability to update/create website content, develop infographics and other social media content, and who are bilingual. Thus, the County was required to provide just-in-time training, contract for consultant-based support, and hire extra help technical experts to support the overall Public Information function.

As the incident evolved, the County invested significant resources into the evolution and development of media spokespersons. Efforts included providing direct training to PHD leadership to ready those individuals to serve as public information ambassadors; development of talking points to support press briefings; and coordination of resources and assets to execute more than 98 press briefings, the majority of which were in English and Spanish (data as of August 30, 2021). American Sign Language interpreters were also widely used during press conferences and other events. Training additional spokespersons was an effective strategy for the County, as the needs specific to this incident required individuals with specific knowledge and expertise in public health and the medical field. The County's communications plan identified experts in the medical field and specifically made use of disease experts from hospitals and health experts across the County, such as pediatricians, to provide information on youth immunizations.

When asked to evaluate the frequency of information provided to the community, **88%** of survey respondents stated that information was provided at the appropriate frequency throughout the incident.

**Recommendation:** Continue to build upon these efforts to develop a cadre of trained PIOs to serve in these functions in future incidents. Consider the broad nature of incidents that may occur across the

County and ensure individuals from lead agencies are incorporated in PIO, JIC, and Media Spokesperson training as appropriate.

**Recommendation:** Re-establish a PIO group throughout the OA to support capability building and redundancy across the County.

**Recommendation:** Leverage mutual aid agreements with jurisdictional partners to leverage PIOs in County response operations.

## Areas for Improvement

### 5.3. While the County has made significant improvements in multi-lingual communications, there are still opportunities for improvement.

The County has made significant investments into supporting multi-lingual communications across all areas; which is a strength of the County. These investments have been made within the context of the JIC and Call Center, as well as in positions hired specifically within the OEM, to ensure public messaging was distributed nearly simultaneously in both English and Spanish. Iconography was widely used to communicate with low-literacy and non-English speaking populations. Further, the County effectively identified solutions to support communications to the Mixteco community, effectively supporting translations through coordination and collaboration with multiple agency partners.

Additionally, the PHD utilized critical needs funds to support outreach to underserved populations, facilitated extensive outreach to community groups and underserved populations through the Latinx Task Force, as well as outreach to north County health providers to ensure coordination of materials and messages. All of which efforts the County PHD received the California State Association of Counties 2021 Challenge Awards; Merit Award in Disaster/Emergency Response & Management. These concepts will be expanded upon in the PHD AAR.

While these are strengths, the County continued to face issues with communication to non-English speaking populations. Issues include:

- Inconsistent translation of externally provided materials into other languages for non-English or Spanish speakers <sup>4</sup>.
- Translators in the Call Center who were not always representative of the community (e.g., they used a Spanish dialect from Spain rather than for Latinx populations), or who did not have technical expertise and lacked a style guide to offer consistent translation of technical terms.
- Bilingual Call Center staff were diverted to other translation tasks, including written communications, reducing the capacity of the Call Center.

**Recommendation:** Reinvigorate the Spanish Translation Team program to invest in expanding translation capacity across the County to provide dedicated support to the JIC and call center.

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that in the context of this recommendation, information and materials from other entities, including the State and federal government, was typically only provided in English.

**Recommendation:** Identify policy and procedure to support translation of critical incident information into Spanish, Mixteco, and other non-primary languages spoken across the County in alignment with the requirements and guidelines identified in *California Government Code § 8594.16 (2018), Accessibility to Emergency Information and Services*.

**Recommendation:** Collaborate with technical experts who are multi-lingual to develop authoritative guidance, including style guides, to support translators with technical terms.

#### **5.4. Communications did not always reach all populations.**

While the overall Public Information function for the County was effective, communications did not always reach all County populations in spite of extensive outreach. In addition to the Latinx Task Force, the County's efforts included: developing materials and messages within the JIC to targeted and vulnerable populations, including African Americans and Spanish speaking populations; executing extensive on the ground outreach to neighborhoods, organizations, employers to best reach people; leveraging social media in an integrated way across the incident period to support coordinated messaging, including supportive campaigns around key issues, such as vaccinations and testing; and leveraging multi-cultural ambassadors and partnerships with community-based organizations to reach vulnerable populations.

While these efforts were extensive, the County should continue to consider additional methods to reach populations across the County. For instance, older populations tend to rely on traditional print media. Conversely, the Latinx community tends to rely on radio and Facebook. Efforts to reach these populations were not always coordinated effectively with OA partners, which resulted in additional issues and confusion associated with messaging.

Additionally, the Board of Supervisors meetings were an excellent pathway for information to be disseminated. Though these meetings are broadcasted and starting in November 2020 the County started to offer live Spanish translations, they do not offer captions or subtitles, nor do they offer an American Sign Language interpreter.

**Recommendation:** Continue efforts to engage all media outlets in incident-specific emergency public information sharing, including print and local and regional radio.

**Recommendation:** Ensure integration of all social media, including Twitter and Facebook, to provide critical incident information to the broadest audience possible.

**Recommendation:** Consider methods to support non-English speaking and non-hearing or hard of hearing populations at public meetings that cover critical disaster information, including options to embed captions, subtitles, and American Sign Language. Consider engaging a telephone relay (TTY) service to support real-time captioning.

### **5.5. The timing of press conferences presented challenges to the Public Information effort.**

Press conferences were often scheduled for 4:30 p.m. Friday afternoons, timed in coordination with when local news went live, even when there was little new information to relay. In cases when there was significant new information to share, the late timing posed a challenge because the Call Center closed at 5:00 p.m. This resulted in the call center being inundated with calls just before 5 p.m. and no weekend staffing to address questions and issues when new information was shared.

**Recommendation:** Establish a schedule for incident-specific press conferences that ensures the JIC, Call Center, and other functions are available to support unified messaging and to address community concerns when new information is provided. Consider adjusting timing to ensure the release of information and timing considers call center operations (e.g., press conferences on Thursdays so that the call center is open on Friday to address concerns).

### **5.6. The process for the release of public information was sometimes hindered by review, approval, and distribution processes and mechanisms.**

The County has relied on traditional (press releases, press conferences) and more modern (social media, web-based videos) methods of communication both associated with COVID-19 response and prior incidents to great effect. As noted in other sections of this Report, the County has effectively developed a JIC with capability to integrate messaging across multiple platforms. However, traditional methods of communication often require lengthier review processes by nature of the type of communication and, in some cases, the extent of stakeholder review that may be required due to the technical or operational uniqueness of information being presented.

Early in the incident, the release of new or important information via social media and other means was often delayed until a formal press release could be sent out. This delay often resulted in public perception that the County was “behind the curve” in releasing information to the public. At times the public and even Call Center operators would get information from a neighboring county hours before the information was released in Santa Barbara County. As the incident evolved, the County was able to streamline the press release review and approval process to support the release of information in a more timely fashion.

**Recommendation:** Review, modernize, and streamline the process for the release of information during incident response. Update processes within the JIC Plan and associated documents and tools.

# Community and Business Recovery Coordination

The County demonstrated significant effort and prioritization to the recovery of businesses and communities impacted by the pandemic and subsequent regulations. Those who were identified as key stakeholders in this effort include but are not limited to the OEM Staff, County Recovery Representatives, Business Leaders, Behavioral Wellness, California Employment Development Department, United Way, and the Education and Enforcement Task Force. Within this section, recommendations are captured for both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that innovative practices and new resources are memorialized in plans, policies, trainings and procedures to support future response operations.

## Strengths

### 6.1. **The *RISE Guide* and Program was a successful tool that engaged approximately 5,000 participants from the community and local businesses.**

The *RISE Guide* offered a framework for how to safely reopen the economy and the community. It was intended to be used as a supplemental tool to the State of California's Resilience Roadmap. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "*The RISE Guide* was a helpful resource," **74%** of survey respondents stated that they found the *RISE Guide* to be a helpful resource. The RISE Ambassador Program provided proactive engagement with the community for information related to community and business recovery coordination. In addition, the County's RISE Ambassadors, the County trained city ambassadors, all of which were very well-received in their jurisdictions. The County moved swiftly and effectively to make changes to the *RISE Guide* and RecoverySBC.org based on the new guidance, information, and needs. Due to frequent changes from the State of California, the actual *RISE Guide* was difficult to keep current and some businesses and community members found it easier to engage the Ambassadors or other resources to stay informed. As implemented, the *RISE Guide* had direct positive impacts on local business operations.

Recognizing that COVID-19 would have impacts to restaurants, retail, and other small businesses across the County, the Board of Supervisors and multiple County Departments took action to give businesses the greatest flexibility possible while meeting various and changing public health protective actions. Chapter 28 of County Code was modified to incorporate *Chapter 28B – Special Encroachment Permits Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic Response*. A specific element of the Small Business & Community Partnership Enhancement Program (SBCPEP), Chapter 28B allows the County Public Works Director to issue special encroachment permits to allow entities to operate in roadway rights-of-way. In many cases, these permits provided a means for businesses to operate while maintaining compliance with any requirements associated with social distancing and capacity restrictions. Additionally, emergency changes to County Permitting were made to allow the use of outdoor areas beyond legal nonconforming limits or beyond what was permitted in land use entitlements. This was done to meet the requirements to operate outside based on the necessity to ensure physical distancing, comply with other public health requirements put in place by federal, State, or local public health officials, to limit the spread of COVID-19, and to support economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. Lastly, County Environmental

Health issued emergency food permits specifically for bars, breweries, distilleries, wineries, and tasting rooms Countywide to allow limited food service under the authority of the State’s public health emergency order to facilitate continued operation and economic resilience.

**6.2. Emails from the County Executive Office were incredibly well-received among the community and business partners.**

Feedback determined that these emails were informative and provided a clear, concise summary of information to share with businesses and partners.

**6.3. The Education and Enforcement Task Force, established in March 2020, allowed an opportunity for collaboration, ongoing coordination, and support for managing complaints.**

The Task Force, including stakeholders from the Sheriff’s Office, OEM, and the University of California Santa Barbara (among others) was established to develop tools for education enforcement of Health Officer orders. The Task Force served as an effective group to support coordination, collaboration, and issue resolution. It also allowed for candid conversations around Health Officer orders, including a forum to obtain clarification on specific items. The participation of law enforcement and the District Attorney’s Office provided authority and clarity to situations that were difficult to enforce. The Task Force provided the opportunity to share information and learn how other jurisdictions were enforcing regulations. Robust participation in task forces and committees enhanced relationships with the Chambers of Commerce and the California Hotel and Lodging Association, which improved the process of resolving complaints and gaining voluntary compliance.

## Areas for Improvement

**6.4. Despite the RISE Program’s success, some businesses were missed or overlooked, as not all businesses were registered within the County.**

While there were earnest efforts to reach all businesses and community partners, not all businesses or community partners are registered with the County and so the County was unable to identify or contact them unless contact information was provided in another manner.

**Recommendation:** Continue to conduct outreach to the private sector to increase engagement in ongoing Community and Business Recovery efforts.

**6.5. Compliance was difficult to enforce which also resulted in issues with community perception.**

While the Sheriff’s Office responded to most complaints of private parties or code violations within their jurisdiction that were filed on the Smartsheet, some members of the community perceived ongoing violations as inaction. The misconception that no action was being taken was damaging to trust in public services and leadership. See 1.8 for additional information regarding enforcement of Health Officer Orders.

Enforcement efforts were hindered by jurisdiction’s understanding of their authority. In some cases, jurisdictions were waiting on the County to act prior to utilizing their own avenues to gain compliance.

While Smartsheet provided an effective, user-friendly platform for the public to file complaints and the County to receive, dispatch, and track complaints, cities and jurisdictions did not regularly update their records, which made it challenging for the County to keep accurate and current records.

Providing the community with more information regarding complaints received and actions taken may have helped curb the perception that there was no enforcement. However, in some cases, requests and recommendations from the Education and Enforcement Task Force to the JIC to address certain aspects of complaints or providing information to the public were not acted upon. Website content was developed late in the response operation; additional guidance would have been beneficial early in the incident.

**Recommendation:** Develop designated points of contact to support follow-up in future incidents where compliance may become an issue.



# Continuity

Continuity of County operations was achieved through unified efforts by personnel at all levels and across all County Departments. Within the context of this Report, certain stakeholders were considered as key to the County's COVID-19 response related to Continuity. Stakeholders include but are not limited to the OEM, Human Resources, Safety, General Services, Finance, Purchasing, and the County Executive Office. Within this section, recommendations are captured for both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that innovative practices and new resources are memorialized in plans, policies, training and procedures to support future response operations.

## Strengths

**7.1. The Finance Section Coordinator created a cost-accounting memo that covered timecards, system coding, paid leave, and other topics, which served as a helpful resource for County personnel.**

When asked to select yes or no about whether Paid Time Leave and other leave concepts were adequately explained to their Department, **78%** of survey respondents said yes.

**Recommendation:** Continue utilization of the cost-accounting memos on topics such as timecards, system coding, and paid leave for future incidents.

**7.2. Technological resources such as DocuSign, the Disaster Service Work Oath platform, and Zoom (among others) were incorporated by the County in the early stages of response, which was invaluable for the County's COOP.**

The County as a whole was faced with transitioning public services from in-person to entirely remote due to COVID-19 and the associated Health Officer Orders and Governor's Executive Orders. The County was able to leverage existing and new technology tools to transition services to a remote environment. For instance, the incorporation of the Disaster Service Worker Oath platform enabled new employees to be sworn in without coming in physical contact with others, thus avoiding the risk of COVID-19 transmission and allowing them to begin work sooner. While transitioning to remote work was difficult, the use of Zoom was integral to facilitate remote communication and collaboration and the maintenance of daily operations.

**Recommendation:** Within the County's *COOP Plan*, memorialize processes and procedures for legislative or policy changes required to support remote operations.

**Recommendation:** Within the County's *COOP Plan*, document the functionalities implemented during remote operations within a matrix focused on Department use to support rapid identification of technologies and systems to support future remote operations while also identifying efficiencies in future procurement.

### **7.3. Available resources were effectively provided to staff upon transition to remote work.**

When asked to select yes or no about whether their Department and staff had the resources needed to work remotely, **91%** of survey respondents said yes. Though there were supply chain challenges and related opportunities for improvement are identified in the next section, the County General Services Department and Information and Communications Technology demonstrated strong coordination efforts to overcome resources challenges throughout incident response and recovery.

## Areas for Improvement

### **7.4. While information technology tools were quickly and effectively deployed to assist many staff members with performing their duties remotely, the County faced difficulties in equipment availability and supply.**

The shortage of available equipment is attributable both to (1) internal demand and depletion of Information and Communications Technology caches and (2) overall supply chain challenges presented due to the global pandemic, including increased global demand. This resulted in two primary consequences. First, in some situations, the shortage of available equipment (e.g., laptops, tablets) due to supply chain challenges delayed the transition to remote work. Second, Information and Communications Technology cache is relied upon to support EOC surge; the depletion of this cache resulted in some issues within the EOC environment.

**Recommendation:** Develop a resource list for setting up remote offices for County personnel. Consider equipment variability based on the job functions of personnel. Review and revise resource list on an annual basis.

**Recommendation:** Develop no-cost standby contracts to support the rapid acquisition of information technology equipment to support future continuity incidents wherein the majority of the County's business functions may be required to operate remotely or in which equipment needs to be quickly replaced.

**Recommendation:** Develop a separate cache within the EOC of information technology resources that are commonly required to support functions.

**Recommendation:** Develop policies for file storage, information sharing, and retention to allow County and OA partners to bring their assigned equipment into the EOC to support their assignment and limit the dependency on Information and Communications Technology's cache.

**Recommendation:** Execute a COOP exercise wherein County personnel are required to activate an alternate-site EOC to understand the long-term impacts associated with the supply chain and evaluate additional information technology resource needs.

### **7.5. A limited understanding of the importance and implications of COOP, including planning and within a real-world activation, hindered success.**

Despite the OEM's noteworthy efforts to develop *COOP Plans* for each Department in the lead-up to and the early days of the pandemic, efforts were quickly diverted to COVID-19 response, leaving the final *COVID-19 COOP Plans* unfinished, unvalidated, and uncoordinated. Some County Departments did not

comply with early COOP planning efforts because they did not interpret COVID-19 as a threat and/or did not perceive continuity planning to be a priority. Throughout the incident, it was unclear who had overall responsibility for the *COOP Plan* implementation, who was managing the plans, and who would receive a copy. Ultimately, the County ran out of time for OEM review, input, and cross-comparison with leadership or prioritization of concepts within the broader Countywide *COOP Plan* effort.

Operationalizing continuity concepts proved to be difficult. Challenges included, but are not limited to:

- The overall authority associated with COOP, including Departmental authorities for devolution and the overall determination of mission essential functions.
- A lack of understanding of “minimal staffing,” which made it difficult to develop a clear picture of the staffing needs and limitations for each Department, as well as reassignment to EOC functions.
- The lack of understanding, support, and enforcement of Disaster Service Worker concepts across County Departments.
- An inconsistency in processes and command structure across Departments, with some Departments operating under a disaster response structure, while operational decisions were made at the manager or director level under their traditional organization and operations.

It is important to note that the lack of understanding regarding the definitions around essential personnel may have been out of an abundance of caution. It was noted that there was a lack of willingness to deem personnel or functions as non-essential due to fear that positions would be eliminated. This caused increased confusion, anxiety, and job security woes.

That being said, COVID-19 highlighted the immense need of the County to have clear and concise COOP plans, policies, and procedures in place. This is particularly important in supporting the County to overcome staffing challenges as experienced within the EOC and PHD field operations, while supporting cross-training and limiting/mitigating staff burnout.

**Recommendation:** Advance ongoing *COOP Plan* development to account for authorities, roles, and responsibilities, including delineation of authority between the County Executive Office and at the Departmental level regarding decision-making for devolution of operations, reductions in force, and/or suspension of non-mission essential functions.

**Recommendation:** Ensure each Department designates a primary COOP point of contact for both planning and response operations.

**Recommendation:** Establish a COOP position within the EOC Command Function to support decision-making and coordination of Countywide efforts.

**Recommendation:** Establish uniform thresholds for activation and operations within the ongoing *COOP Plan* effort.

**Recommendation:** Ensure overall EOC staffing incorporates key considerations associated with Disaster Service Worker concepts to mitigate concerns about the designation of COOP identified mission essential functions or personnel.

## 7.6. The remote work process was new and lacked clarity.

Personnel were not always familiar with completing their job duties virtually; in some cases, personnel had not worked remotely prior to the pandemic. Employees expressed concerns over whether the determination to work from home was fair. For instance, there is a perception that seniority or personal connections were influential in the approval of remote work and that management did not trust staff to work remotely. Some staff never had the option to work remotely due to their job responsibilities. Additionally, creative concepts for work plans such as staggering in-office hours or extending the ability to work in the office after hours were not considered across all Departments.

**Recommendation:** Establish and formalize a policy for remote work to be applied to the whole County.

**Recommendation:** Within the ongoing *COOP Plan* effort, consider Countywide mission essential functions to clearly define what services can and cannot be performed remotely in order to ensure transparency.

**Recommendation:** Within the ongoing *COOP Plan* effort, consider Department-specific alternate work plans that would support onsite operations in more limited capacities.

**Recommendation:** Conduct a FE in which County employees' transition to remote operational status with little to no notice, allowing the County to maintain remote operational capability while supporting future capability development as new technologies emerge.

# Conclusion

As of the publication of this report, the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. As of the date of this report, the PHD DOC remains active and is continuing to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The County continues to coordinate with partners to enhance its capabilities, partnerships, and resources.

Appendix A of this Report presents the recommendations and IP associated with both strengths and areas for improvement. The IP lays out a course of action for the identified actions designed to strengthen the County's capabilities. By dedicating resources to these improvements, the County will continue to enhance safety and preparedness measures designed to protect lives and property by effectively preparing for, preventing, mitigating, responding to, and recovering from disasters, threats, and other emergencies.

# Appendix A: Improvement Plan

The IP outlines the recommended implementation of actions corresponding with recommendations for improvement. Primary agencies of responsibility, potential methods to effectively implement recommended improvements, and timeline recommendations to complete concepts are detailed below. For the purposes of this IP, immediate-term activities are recommended to occur within three months following approval of this Report; short-term activities within six months; intermediate-term within nine months; and long-term within one year. The purpose of the Improvement Plan timeline is to support the County in the prioritization of resources, including financial investments and personnel time. It is important to note that this timeline is developed independent of the availability of County resources to implement the recommendations.

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Overall	1.2	For sensitive Smartsheet and Box.com files, consider implementing a permissions system to grant or revoke access based on files and sheets shared. Consider whether the transition to Microsoft 365 will impact file sharing among County and OA stakeholders.	OEM/Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	Short-Term
Overall	1.3	Continue to provide community members enhanced accessibility to participate in Board of Supervisors meetings via virtual participation methods even after these Executive Orders expire and/or post-pandemic.	Clerk of Board	Short-Term
Overall	1.4	Memorialize MAC activity and list involved groups to support decision-making and operations within the EOC. Pre-identify which groups should always be activated for specific risks. Additional best practices should be elevated to ensure key concepts are operationalized for future pandemic (or if applicable to other incident types) response and recovery operations.	OEM	Short-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Overall	1.5	Memorialize specific leadership structures and concepts, which could include incident adaptive policies. Identify Department, division, and/or agency leaders for future incidents where the subject matter expertise and/or legislative authority required to support response is outside of the OEM.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.5	Ensure documentation associated with all decision-making structures is maintained within EOC documentation platforms and transitioned or shared between leadership models as response continues to adapt to needs.	OEM	Short-Term
Overall	1.5	For long-term incidents, consider memorializing the concept of mid-incident evaluations within the leadership structure to allow the County to evaluate the response and course correct, as necessary.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.6	Identify a current position within the EOC to focus on mental health support. Consider assigning responsibilities to the existing Safety Officer or a Human Resources Liaison. Ensure the position is equipped to provide referrals to EOC and other response personnel to mental health support, including third party providers, for current and future resources the County may secure.	OEM	Short-Term
Overall	1.6	Develop a procedure applicable to all incident activations, associated with communication about available mental health resources within the EOC. Consider integrating into assigned position binder, to include frequency of outreach, such as during shift change/briefing schedules.	OEM	Short-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Overall	1.6	Consider continuing to utilize non-traditional mental health approaches, such as bringing emotional support dogs into the EOC, to bolster morale and support individuals contributing to the response operation.	OEM	Short-Term
Overall	1.7	Ensure all County employees know, recognize, and are ready to fulfill their roles as Disaster Service Workers. Reinforce the responsibilities of current County employees as Disaster Service Workers, including the potential for deployment to the EOC or field sites. Incorporate Disaster Service Worker concepts into all County job descriptions, as well as into hiring and on-boarding practices. Build a program that supports the readiness of Disaster Service Workers, including notice and no-notice activations in a real-world or exercise environment, to build skill while assessing readiness.	Human Resources (HR)	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.7	Implement training requirements for ICS, SEMS, and NIMS training for all Disaster Service Workers in alignment with the County-NIMS Training Matrix for County Employees, EOC team members, budget officers, and Board of Supervisors. Identify and implement a centralized system for tracking the completed ICS and NIMS training certificates of Disaster Service Workers.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.7	Clarify via policy to Departments and divisions the budget reimbursement process associated with Disaster Service Worker assignment to response operations.	Auditor-Controller	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.7	Clarify via policy the capability to reassign special fund staff and the processes required to meet funding requirements.	Auditor-Controller	Intermediate-Term



Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Overall	1.7	Consider expanding Disaster Service Worker concepts, including fiscal support for special fund employees, within Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the <i>Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances</i> or within appropriate County Code regarding emergency expenditures.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.7	Create and maintain a list of positions within the EOC matrixed to the County Departments that will staff those positions. Ensure County Departments understand the knowledge, skills, and capabilities required for those positions and support training, as appropriate. Ensure that County Departments assign a minimum of three staff per assigned position and support their participation in EOC trainings. Executive Managers shall be included in the assigned staff to EOC positions.	OEM/ Department Heads	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.7	Identify personnel to support response operations in administrative roles, particularly for long-term response incidents, to support record keeping and other task-level assignments in collaboration with EOC Section leadership.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.7	Identify and implement a single unified process or scheduling software to ensure the EOC and other field response units understand shift-based staffing available, alongside training needs and staffing gaps.	HR	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.7	Consider establishing a no-cost, standby services contract to allow the County to access surge staffing support for emergency support functions in the event of another significant or catastrophic disaster. Structure the contract similar to the disaster cost recovery contract established by the County wherein the County will only incur costs upon contract activation.	OEM	Long-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Overall	1.9	Develop a disaster purchasing manual that accounts for policies, forms (checklists and job aids), process, and thresholds for approval, including approval authorities of the OEM Director and County Executive Office senior leadership. This should include the issues identified above, as well as those identified in previous AAR and IP.	Auditor-Controller	Short-Term
Overall	1.9	Provide training on the disaster purchasing manual. At a minimum, provide training to professionals assigned to the Logistics and Finance Sections. Incorporate the approval process into training for Section leadership. Develop a just-in-time training for individuals who may be new to the EOC.	Auditor-Controller	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.9	Within the context of procuring an incident management software, establish a unified process for ordering. Ensure ordering is consolidated through the EOC.	OEM/General Services (GS)	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.9	Review the recommendations from the County Leadership Certificate Program associated with the disaster contract process and training. Affirm task assignments to the OEM and other responsible Departments and ensure integration within the EOC in alignment with ICS, SEMS, and NIMS.	OEM/Auditor-Controller	Short-Term
Overall	1.10	Pre-identify approval and purchasing authorities for essential EOC positions and delegation of those authorities when alternative leadership structures are utilized (see associated recommendations in 1.5 above).	OEM	Intermediate-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Overall	1.11	Revisit and revise Chapter 12 of the <i>Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances</i> . Include consideration for the roles memorialized in the County Code; the structure and composition of advisory and policy bodies established to support response and recovery; and requirements associated with activation of these bodies.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.11	Consider formalizing within the context of recommendations associated with 1.5 MACS within Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the <i>Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances</i> to support MAC in the event of a future disaster not led by the OEM.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.11	Formalize delegations of authority for the County Executive Officer (Director of Emergency Services) associated with decision-making and requisition authority.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.11	Clarify the role of the Director of Emergency Management, including roles, responsibilities, and authorities before, during, and after declared emergencies.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.12	Develop a unified County inventory of planning products created to support the response to COVID-19, including plans developed by the EOC and PHD DOC. Collaboratively review planning products to support the revision and development of multi-agency plans which will support future public health incident response and recovery.	PHD	Short-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Overall	1.12	<p>Evaluate current plans developed by the OEM to determine opportunities for improvement based on the lessons learned for COVID-19. Consider revising plans in alignment with the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed revisions to Chapter 12 Emergency Management of the <i>Santa Barbara County Code of Ordinances</i>.</li> <li>• Incident management roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Multi-agency coordination structures.</li> <li>• Logistics and resource management, including scarce resource allocation.</li> <li>• Disaster cost recovery, finance, and administration.</li> <li>• Long-term community recovery structures.</li> <li>• Medical surge operations.</li> <li>• Mutual aid.</li> <li>• Emergency public information.</li> <li>• Mass care and shelter operations, including non-congregate shelter structures.</li> </ul>	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Overall	1.12	<p>Provide advance planning training to the Planning Section. Incorporate advance planning training within Section leadership training to ensure advance planning concepts are understood and that products developed within the Planning Section account for multi-agency needs and resources.</p>	OEM	Intermediate-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
EOC Functions	2.1	Continue the County's current project to build a new larger JIC and Call Center space to accommodate large response operations. Ensure the space is equipped with the appropriate technology, including sufficient telephone lines. The proposed Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center and Regional Fire Communications Center (expansion of the current EOC) is currently in design and is proposed to have 16 Call Center stations, which will meet the majority of the County's previous (non-COVID-19) response needs.	GS/OEM/Fire	Long-Term
EOC Functions	2.2	Engage new Departmental personnel in EOC FE to support continued education, engagement, and collaboration among County partners.	OEM/ Department Heads	Long-Term
EOC Functions	2.2	Engage and train professionals who excelled in EOC functions during COVID-19 response activations for future disaster-specific activations and advanced exercises.	OEM/ Department Heads	Short-Term
EOC Functions	2.4	Identify and invest in an incident management software to support response coordination and collaboration. Ensure that all necessary stakeholders and Departments have access to and receive training on the incident management software. Evaluate whether DOCs should also integrate within the incident management software.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
EOC Functions	2.4	Ensure Situation Status Reports and other situational awareness tools are incorporated into the County's incident management software.	OEM	Long-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
EOC Functions	2.4	Within the incident management software or existing tools, maintain use of an Incident Tracking Log (Form 214) specific to individuals supporting the EOC to identify daily accomplishments, priorities for the next operational period, and political or other concerns to raise awareness.	OEM	Long-Term
EOC Functions	2.4	Establish a file retention policy for incident response, including file saving policies associated with new virtual platforms being utilized for disaster response operations.	OEM/County Counsel	Short-Term
EOC Functions	2.6	Finalize position-specific binders to support all 48 positions within the EOC. Prioritize development of binders for critical positions and/or positions where the County has previously experienced challenges associated with staffing. Ensure binders are provided in electronic and paper format to support COOP and reference for each position.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
EOC Functions	2.6	Develop just-in-time training for EOC staff positions so that new staff can be trained quickly on roles they do not typically perform or had not previously staffed within the EOC. Prioritize development training for critical positions and/or positions where the County has previously experienced challenges associated with staffing.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
EOC Functions	2.6	Consider establishing an annual training for the Planning Section in order to support ongoing capability development. Consider executing this training in alignment with personnel designated to support the Planning Section within DOCs.	OEM	Long-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
<b>EOC Functions</b>	2.6	Evaluate and revised the County’s Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan. Considerations should include the tempo for EOC position-specific training (quarterly or biannually); training to support redundancy within County Departments by rotating multiple individuals through position-specific training; and considerations for Disaster Service Worker training to include ICS/SEMS required training.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
<b>EOC Functions</b>	2.7	Dedicate a Call Center Liaison to the Call Center in future activations of the EOC. Provide training to individuals who may serve as Call Center Liaisons to build redundancy.	OEM	Short-Term
<b>EOC Functions</b>	2.8	Ensure an operational tempo is established in the EOC, to include a debriefing process and considerations for mental health. Memorialize the Daily Briefing Form for non-24/7 activations and establish the operational tempo associated with shift durations to ensure consistency across incident types (e.g., 8-hour, 12-hour, 24-hour).	OEM	Short-Term
<b>EOC Functions</b>	2.8	Develop a protocol to ensure EOC leadership is aware of when assigned staff are being demobilized and what new staff are assigned.	OEM	Short-Term
<b>EOC/DOC Coordination</b>	3.3	Establish thresholds that are applicable to all incidents for when there should be a transition from a DOC to the EOC. Include potential unified management structures and systems for those incidents in which a specific Department has a legal authority for response (see 1.5 and 1.10). Incorporate incident thresholds into appropriate emergency operations plans at the Departmental and County levels.	OEM	Intermediate-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
<b>EOC/DOC Coordination</b>	3.3	Incorporate scenarios into the County's Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan that include both the DOC and the EOC, including the transition of incident coordination.	OEM	Long-Term
<b>EOC/DOC Coordination</b>	3.3	Implement a uniform electronic inventory management system in collaboration with establishing an incident management software to support cross-Department management of County resources. Ensure systems and associated procedures include instances where the DOC, ICP, and/or the EOC are activated at the same time.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
<b>EOC/DOC Coordination</b>	3.3	Provide training on systems and forms, including the 213, at the beginning of the activation of any DOC in a just-in-time format to ensure a common understanding of information management and sharing practices.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
<b>EOC/DOC Coordination</b>	3.4	In collaboration with multi-agency partners, develop an all-hazard unified liaison toolkit to support integration of liaisons into DOC and EOCs.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
<b>EOC/DOC Coordination</b>	3.4	Review and update current DOC plans, policies, and procedures to support effective integration of EOC Liaisons.	OEM/Public Works (PW)/PHD	Intermediate-Term
<b>EOC/DOC Coordination</b>	3.4	Include OEM personnel and outside agency liaisons during DOC activations and/or exercises.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
<b>OA Coordination</b>	4.3	Memorialize the Smartsheet developed to coordinate across the OA in order to ensure it is integrated into future response operations. Ensure questions and responses are shared broadly with partners to limit duplicative requests for information.	OEM	Short-Term



Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
OA Coordination	4.3	Explore opportunities to extend the County-purchased and maintained incident management software across the whole County, including to OA partners.	OEM	Long-Term
OA Coordination	4.4	Develop a volunteer management plan to support the future use of volunteers to support the County's response operations, including exploring the potential to formalize the City of Santa Barbara's support of this function in all future disasters. Leverage pre-existing County Departmental plans, such as those developed and leveraged by Animal Services, to capitalize on already established best practices and ensure integration.	OEM/OA Partners	Intermediate-Term
OA Coordination	4.4	Collaborate with VOAD to clarify and memorialize specific roles and responsibilities within the EOC. Develop a position-specific binder and training to support VOAD representatives within the EOC.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
OA Coordination	4.5	Develop a policy to specify the requirements for and process associated with onboarding volunteers and reimbursement of volunteer costs during an incident or disaster. This should include costs associated with required registrations and, as applicable, training.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
OA Coordination	4.6	Develop a process to review, vet, respond to, and track offers and proposals for private sector aid.	OEM/OA Partners	Intermediate-Term
OA Coordination	4.6	Consider adding a Public-Private Liaison position within the EOC.	OEM	Short-Term
OA Coordination	4.6	Consider establishing contracts or MOU to support coordination and management of donated or volunteer resources from the private sector into the response operation.	OEM	Long-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
<b>OA Coordination</b>	4.7	Develop training for OA partners on mutual aid and their roles and responsibilities under the OA as independent government entities.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
<b>OA Coordination</b>	4.7	Ensure that the County has the appropriate documentation with local government jurisdictions that identify the County as the OA Coordinator and the associated authorities. Ensure associated MOU address mutual aid needs to support the OA EOC and other response structures.	OEM	Short-Term
<b>OA Coordination</b>	4.8	Memorialize the Homelessness Task Force, including considerations for participating agencies and scope of responsibility. Engage the Homelessness Task Force in the decision-making process as to whether the EOC will be activated for any incident and ensure the Task Force is engaged throughout the activation.	OEM/Community Services Department (CSD)	Short-Term
<b>OA Coordination</b>	4.9	Incorporate and activate an Access, Disability, and Functional Needs Liaison position into the EOC for all activations to ensure consideration of access, disability, and functional needs and to provide OA partners a Liaison to support issue escalation.	OEM	Short-Term
<b>Public Information Management</b>	5.1	Document workflow processes within the JIC to support coordination of incident information to the public for future incidents to ensure a unified message, especially when information is provided across multiple websites.	OEM/County Executive Office	Short-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Public Information Management	5.1	Continue using ReadySBC.org as the authoritative source of incident information for all incidents OEM staff are supporting or when the EOC is activated. As appropriate, in future incidents, leverage ReadySBC, social media, and other resources to share emergency public information. Integrate Department-specific resources into emergency public information concepts where the OEM is not the lead agency or subject matter expert. Pre-identify content concepts that are pertinent to every event so updates can be made quickly and easily.	OEM	Long-Term
Public Information Management	5.1	Create an on-call list of county staff trained in the new county website platform to support incident webpage management. Train those individuals on Joint Information Systems and responding to the JIC.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Public Information Management	5.1	Evaluate how to present incident data through County resources (e.g., ESRI, SmartSheet, etc.) on the incident website.	OEM	Short-Term
Public Information Management	5.2	Continue to build upon these efforts to develop a cadre of trained PIOs to serve in these functions in future incidents. Consider the broad nature of incidents that may occur across the County and ensure individuals from lead agencies are incorporated in PIO, JIC, and Media Spokesperson training as appropriate.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Public Information Management	5.2	Re-establish a PIO group throughout the OA to support capability building and redundancy across the County.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Public Information Management	5.2	Leverage mutual aid agreements with jurisdictional partners to leverage PIOs in County response operations.	OEM	Intermediate-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Public Information Management	5.3	Reinvigorate the Spanish Translation Team program to invest in expanding translation capacity across the County to provide dedicated support to the JIC and call center.	OEM	Short-Term
Public Information Management	5.3	Identify policy and procedure to support translation of critical incident information into Spanish, Mixteco, and other non-primary languages spoken across the County in alignment with the requirements and guidelines identified in <i>California Government Code § 8594.16 (2018), Accessibility to Emergency Information and Services</i> .	CEO	Intermediate-Term
Public Information Management	5.3	Collaborate with technical experts who are multi-lingual to develop authoritative guidance, including style guides, to support translators with technical terms.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Public Information Management	5.4	Continue efforts to engage all media outlets in incident-specific emergency public information sharing, including print and local and regional radio.	OEM	Short-Term
Public Information Management	5.4	Ensure integration of all social media, including Twitter and Facebook, to provide critical incident information to the broadest audience possible.	CEO	Short-Term
Public Information Management	5.4	Consider methods to support non-English speaking and non-hearing or hard of hearing populations at public meetings that cover critical disaster information, including options to embed captions, subtitles, and American Sign Language. Consider engaging a TTY service to support real-time captioning.	County Executive Office/Clerk of the Board	Short-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Public Information Management	5.5	Establish a schedule for incident-specific press conferences that ensures the JIC, Call Center, and other functions are available to support unified messaging and to address community concerns when new information is provided. Consider adjusting timing to ensure the release of information and timing considers call center operations (e.g., press conferences on Thursdays to so that the call center is open on Friday to address concerns).	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Public Information Management	5.6	Review, modernize, and streamline the process for the release of information during incident response. Update processes within the JIC Plan and associated documents and tools.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Community and Business Recovery Coordination	6.4	Continue to conduct outreach to the private sector to increase engagement in ongoing Community and Business Recovery efforts.	CEO	Short-Term
Community and Business Recovery Coordination	6.5	Develop designated points of contact to support follow-up in future incidents where compliance may become an issue.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Continuity	7.1	Continue utilization of the cost-accounting memos on topics such as timecards, system coding, and paid leave for future incidents.	Auditor Controller	Short-Term
Continuity	7.2	Within the County's <i>COOP Plan</i> , memorialize processes and procedures for legislative or policy changes required to support remote operations.	County Executive Office/GS/HR	Short-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Continuity	7.2	Within the County's <i>COOP Plan</i> , document the functionalities implemented during remote operations within a matrix focused on Department use to support rapid identification of technologies and systems to support future remote operations while also identifying efficiencies in future procurement.	GS	Short-Term
Continuity	7.4	Develop a resource list for setting up remote offices for County personnel. Consider equipment variability based on the job functions of personnel. Review and revise resource list on an annual basis.	GS	Intermediate-Term
Continuity	7.4	Develop no-cost standby contracts to support the rapid acquisition of information technology equipment to support future continuity incidents wherein the majority of the County's business functions may be required to operate remotely or in which equipment needs to be quickly replaced.	ICT	Long-Term
Continuity	7.4	Develop a separate cache within the EOC of information technology resources that are commonly required to support functions.	OEM/ICT	Intermediate-Term
Continuity	7.4	Develop policies for file storage, information sharing, and retention to allow County and OA partners to bring their assigned equipment into the EOC to support their assignment and limit the dependency on Information and Communications Technology's cache.	OEM/ICT	Intermediate-Term
Continuity	7.4	Execute a COOP exercise wherein County personnel are required to activate an alternate-site EOC to understand the long-term impacts associated with the supply chain and evaluate additional information technology resource needs.	OEM	Intermediate-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
Continuity	7.5	Advance ongoing <i>COOP Plan</i> development to account for authorities, roles, and responsibilities, including delineation of authority between the County Executive Office and at the Departmental level regarding decision-making for devolution of operations, reductions in force, and/or suspension of non-mission essential functions.	County Executive Office	Short-Term
Continuity	7.5	Ensure each Department designates a primary COOP point of contact for both planning and response operations.	All Department Heads	Short-Term
Continuity	7.5	Establish a COOP position within the EOC Command Function to support decision-making and coordination of Countywide efforts.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Continuity	7.5	Establish uniform thresholds for activation and operations within the ongoing <i>COOP Plan</i> effort.	OEM	Short-Term
Continuity	7.5	Ensure overall EOC staffing incorporates key considerations associated with Disaster Service Worker concepts to mitigate concerns about the designation of COOP identified mission essential functions or personnel.	OEM	Intermediate-Term
Continuity	7.6	Establish and formalize a policy for remote work to be applied to the whole County.	HR	Short-Term
Continuity	7.6	Within the ongoing <i>COOP Plan</i> effort, consider Countywide mission essential functions to clearly define what services can and cannot be performed remotely in order to ensure transparency.	All Department Heads	Short-Term
Continuity	7.6	Within the ongoing <i>COOP Plan</i> effort, consider Department-specific alternate work plans that would support onsite operations in more limited capacities.	All Department Heads	Short-Term

Category	Finding (#)	Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeline
<b>Continuity</b>	7.6	Conduct a FE in which County employees' transition to remote operational status with little to no notice, allowing the County to maintain remote operational capability while supporting future capability development as new technologies emerge.	OEM	Long-Term



# Appendix B: Surveys

This section presents an overview of questions and responses to the County survey and the continuity survey that were used in the Data Collection phase of report development. Raw data from the surveys, including long-form responses, were provided to the County prior to the publication of this report.

## County of Santa Barbara COVID-19 After-Action Report Survey

**This survey was sent to 250 individuals involved in the County’s COVID-19 response. It received 64 responses, resulting in a 26% response rate.**

“The goal of this survey is to capture information on the County of Santa Barbara’s COVID-19 response efforts, including successes and opportunities for improvement.

Questions are based on topics identified through a document review process and a series of facilitated discussions and are customized to the role of respondents. If you participated in one or more facilitated discussions, this survey provides an opportunity to elaborate on your feedback. If you were unable to participate in a facilitated discussion, this survey provides an opportunity to share your feedback on the County’s response efforts.

Hagerty Consulting will use the information gathered to create an After-Action Report to ensure the County reviews its response and identifies how the County may be able to improve response to future emergencies to best serve the community.

Please answer all questions to the best of your knowledge and with complete honesty. All participants and responses will remain anonymous. This survey is estimated to take no more than 15 minutes to complete.”

1. To what extent did you feel that Situation Status Reports were useful? (Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

- I found Situation Status Repor... 28
- I found Situation Status Repor... 24
- I did not find Situation Status ... 4



2. The Reopening in Safe Environment (RISE) Guide was a helpful resource. (Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

- Strongly agree 19
- Somewhat agree 19
- Neither agree nor disagree 12
- Somewhat disagree 2
- Strongly disagree 0



3. What was your authoritative online source for public information regarding the County's response to COVID-19?

[More Details](#)

- ReadySBC.org 4
- PublicHealthSBC.org 39
- Both websites 15
- Other 6



4. Information was provided to the community:

[More Details](#)

● Too frequently	3
● At the appropriate frequency	56
● Too infrequently	5



5. I found workgroups, committees, and/or taskforces beneficial. (Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	25
● Somewhat agree	19
● Neither agree nor disagree	11
● Somewhat disagree	4
● Strongly disagree	0



6. Information on the reimbursement process was available and clear. (Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	3
● Somewhat agree	8
● Neither agree nor disagree	15
● Somewhat disagree	12
● Strongly disagree	3



---

7. How effective was the use of different technologies for collaboration (e.g., Box, Smartsheet)?  
(Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

Very effective	14
Somewhat effective	21
Neither effective nor ineffective	8
Somewhat ineffective	4
Very ineffective	1



---

8. Advance planning efforts would have improved the County's COVID-19 response.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Strongly agree	21
Somewhat agree	21
Neither agree nor disagree	18
Somewhat disagree	4
Strongly disagree	0



9. Please share any additional comments on advance planning needs or benefits.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

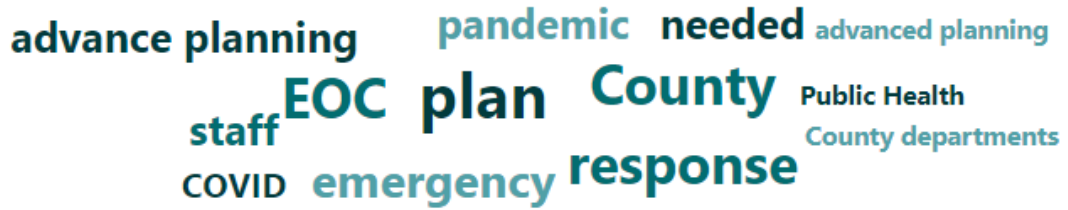
34

Responses

Latest Responses

"Regarding question 8. Not sure how the County, let alone the entire ...

9 respondents (28%) answered **plan** for this question.



10. Concerns about contracting COVID-19 at work complicated the process of securing staffing.

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Strongly agree	16
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Somewhat agree	20
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Neither agree nor disagree	13
<span style="color: red;">●</span> Somewhat disagree	11
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> Strongly disagree	4



11. Did you observe or experience inefficiencies, such as duplication of efforts or wasted time?

[More Details](#)

- I observed or experienced inef... 33
- I observed or experienced inef... 10
- I did not observe or experienc... 21



12. If you observed or experienced inefficiencies, please describe.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

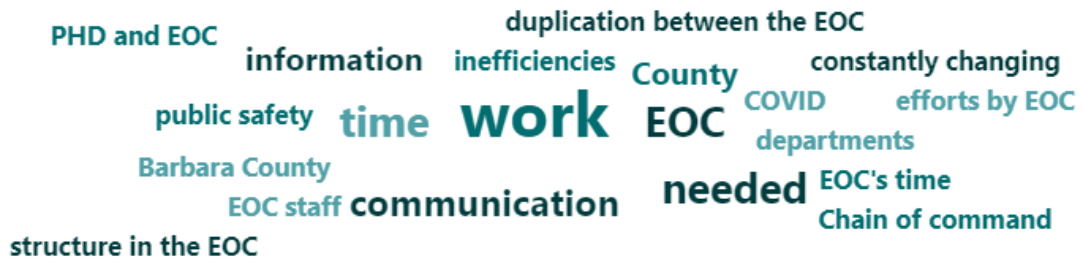
30

Responses

Latest Responses

*"Such inefficiencies that were experienced were unavoidable, because ..."*

10 respondents (36%) answered **work** for this question.



---

13. Recognizing that the response to COVID-19 occurred over an extended period of time and is still ongoing, please select the extent to which the duration of the incident impacted your performance and personal wellbeing.

[More Details](#)

- I was extremely burnt out. 25
- I was somewhat burnt out. 30
- My performance and wellbein... 9



---

14. What resources and support would have been helpful to avoid burnout? (Please select all that apply.) If you select "Other," please explain. (Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

- Clarity of role(s) 24
- Administrative support 16
- Modified scheduling 15
- Additional staffing 34
- Other 19



15. Were you **assigned to the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)** AND/OR were you invited to the Facilitated Discussion on **EOC Functions**?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

- Yes 36
- No 28



16. Was there an ample bench of staff available to support the needs of the EOC?

[More Details](#)

- Yes 18
- No 18



17. Were you responsible for your traditional role while activated in the EOC?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

- No, someone else covered my... 3
- No, my traditional role was no... 2
- Yes, I felt responsible for both ... 31





18. Did staff backups have the information and authority needed to perform their role? (Skip if not observed.)

[More Details](#)

- Staff backups possessed all of ... 7
- Staff backups lacked some of t... 11
- Staff backups lacked all of the ... 4



19. For what portion of the incident was it clear who was in charge?

[More Details](#)

- 75-100% 14
- 50-75% 13
- 25-50% 5
- 0-25% 4



20. Frequent changes made it difficult to know if I was working with the most up-to-date information.

[More Details](#)

- Strongly agree 9
- Somewhat agree 21
- Neither agree nor disagree 4
- Somewhat disagree 2
- Strongly disagree 0



---

21. To what extent was it beneficial for the EOC to work in a shared space?

[More Details](#)

● Very beneficial	11
● Somewhat beneficial	17
● Neither beneficial nor detrimen...	5
● Somewhat detrimental	3
● Very detrimental	0



---

22. To what extent did you have access to a readily available supply of resources within the EOC?

[More Details](#)

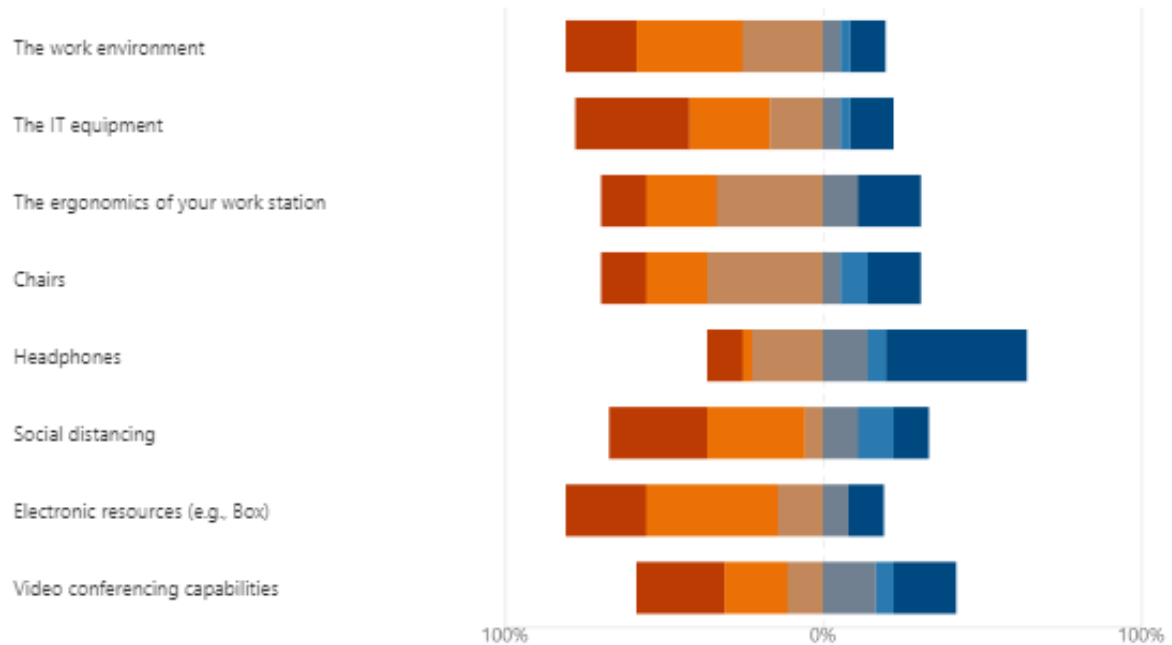
● I had all necessary supplies.	10
● I had most of the necessary su...	18
● I lacked most of the necessary...	3
● I lacked all of the necessary su...	0
● I did not need supplies.	5



23. To what extent were you satisfied or dissatisfied with:

[More Details](#)

■ Very satisfied  
 ■ Somewhat satisfied  
 ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
 ■ Somewhat dissatisfied  
 ■ Very dissatisfied  
 ■ N/A



24. What resource(s) can the EOC add that would improve your assignment in the future?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

19

Responses

Latest Responses

"EOC Staff clear on their roles and their roles clearly identified to othe..."

5 respondents (29%) answered **EOC** for this question.



25. Were you assigned a role in which you worked in the **EOC or PHD Department Operations Center (DOC) and coordinated with the other group** AND/OR were you invited to the Facilitated Discussion on **EOC/DOC Coordination**?

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Yes	23
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> No	41



26. Please respond if you were part of the DOC:

The EOC effectively utilized the resources/support/information available from the DOC.

[More Details](#)

● Agree	7
● Disagree	5
● Neither agree nor disagree	5



27. If you responded to the previous question, please elaborate.

[More Details](#)

Insights

8

Responses

Latest Response:

*"It seemed at times EOC Staff did not communicate with each other o..."*

4 respondents (57%) answered **EOC** for this question.



28. Please respond if you were part of the EOC:

The DOC effectively utilized the resources/support/information available from the EOC.

[More Details](#)

● Agree	4
● Disagree	8
● Neither agree nor disagree	7



29. If you responded to the previous question, please elaborate.

[More Details](#)

Insights

7

Responses

Latest Responses

*"Individuals assisting me worked directly the DOC"*

3 respondents (50%) answered **DOC** for this question.



30. Information sharing between the EOC and DOC was rapid and effective.

[More Details](#)

● Agree	6
● Disagree	10
● Neither agree nor disagree	7



31. Frequent changes made it difficult to know if I was working with the most up-to-date information.

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	6
● Somewhat agree	8
● Neither agree nor disagree	6
● Somewhat disagree	2
● Strongly disagree	1



32. The process for integrating the DOC into the EOC was:

[More Details](#)

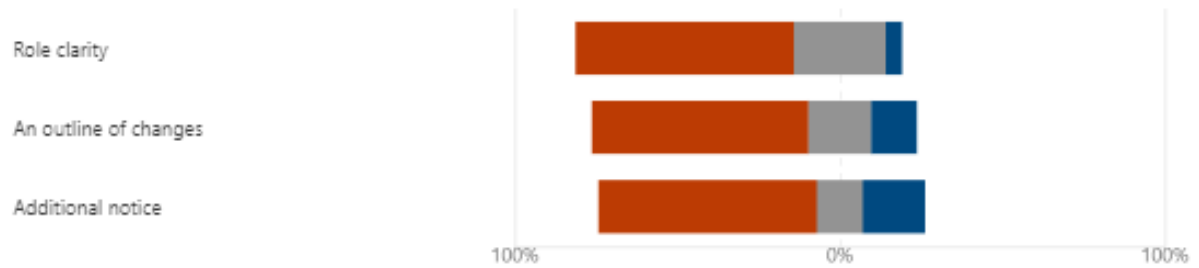
● Seamless and efficient	1
● Confusing and lacked ample a...	17
● Flawed, but effective	5



33. If you responded "Confusing and lacked ample advance notice" or "Flawed, but effective" to the previous question, please indicate the extent to which the following resources would have been beneficial.

[More Details](#)

Very beneficial    Somewhat beneficial    Neither beneficial nor detrimental



34. For what portion of the incident was it clear who was in charge?

[More Details](#)

75-100%	7
50-75%	8
25-50%	5
0-25%	3





35. How effective was the role of the EOC/DOC liaison in practice?

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Very effective	4
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Somewhat effective	8
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Neither effective nor ineffective	6
<span style="color: red;">●</span> Somewhat ineffective	5
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> Very ineffective	0



36. Please share any additional feedback regarding the effectiveness of the EOC/DOC liaison in practice.

[More Details](#)

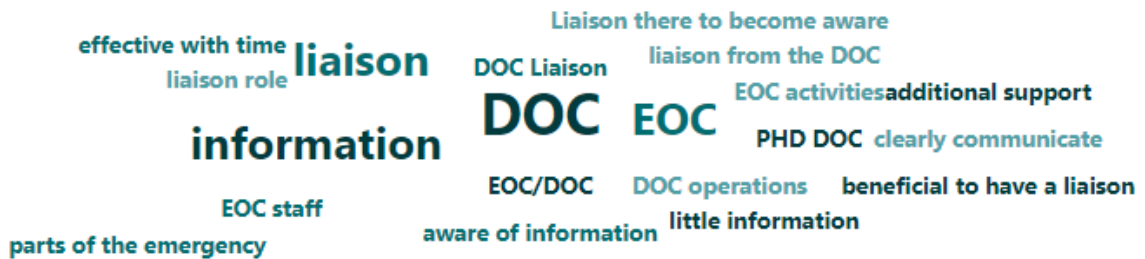
Insights

8

Responses

Latest Responses

5 respondents (63%) answered **DOC** for this question.



37. To what extent did you feel a sense of trust and partnership between the EOC and DOC throughout the response?

[More Details](#)

- I felt a strong sense of partner... 5
- I felt neutral about the partner... 11
- I felt a strong sense of division... 7



38. Were you an **Operational Area Coordination (OA) partner** AND/OR were you invited to the Facilitated Discussion on **Operational Area Coordination**?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

- Yes 23
- No 41



39. I felt that the County of Santa Barbara provided the public with current, timely, and accurate information to related to COVID-19.

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	13
● Somewhat agree	7
● Neither agree nor disagree	1
● Somewhat disagree	2
● Strongly disagree	0



40. Frequent changes made it difficult to know if I was working with the most up-to-date information.

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	4
● Somewhat agree	10
● Neither agree nor disagree	4
● Somewhat disagree	2
● Strongly disagree	3



41. To what extent did you feel that the EOC OA Liaison email was effective in providing and receiving information?

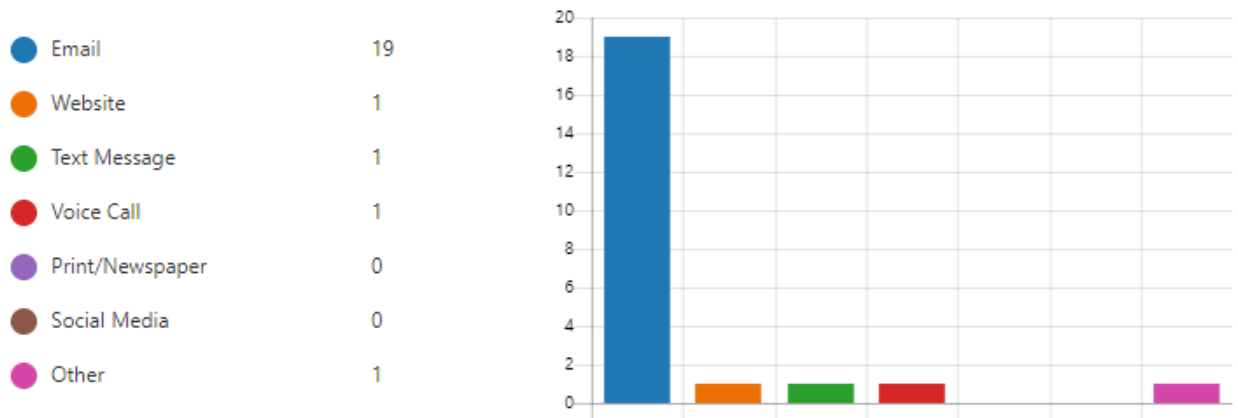
[More Details](#)

● Very effective	14
● Somewhat effective	6
● Neither effective nor ineffective	2
● Somewhat ineffective	1
● Very ineffective	0



42. As an Operational Area partner, how do you prefer to receive communications in the future?

[More Details](#)



43. What media source did you most frequently use for current, timely, and accurate information related to COVID-19?

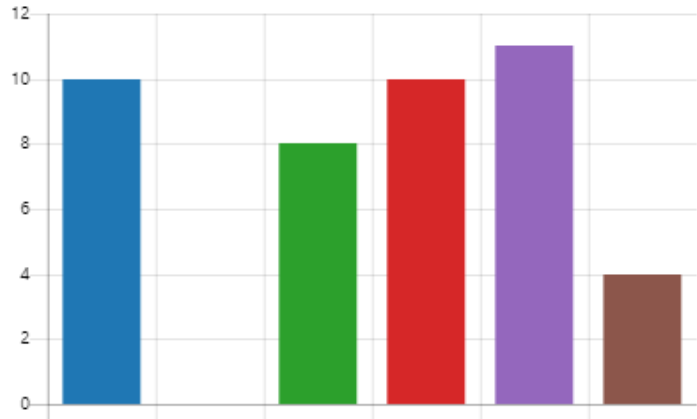
[More Details](#)



44. In your opinion, which of the following would have improved communication within the Operational Area throughout COVID-19? Select all that apply.

[More Details](#)

- Hold OA briefings more frequ... 10
- Increase duration of OA briefi... 0
- Establish more task forces bas... 8
- Use online situation status bo... 10
- Create centralized, interactive ... 11
- Other 4



45. Please select the option that most accurately described your cooperation and collaboration with OA partners during COVID-19.

[More Details](#)

- I worked closer with OA partn... 15
- I did not notice a difference in... 5
- I worked with OA partners less... 3



46. Did you have a clear understanding of the roles and functions of other responders/partner agencies supporting the County of Santa Barbara's COVID-19 response?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	15
● Somewhat	8
● No	0



47. Please share any feedback or ideas that would have improved Operational Area Coordination and Communication. Please focus on EOC coordination.

[More Details](#)

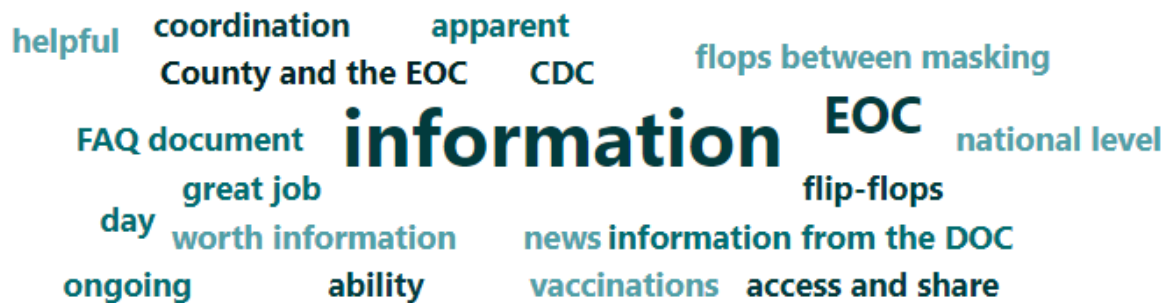
Insights

5

Responses


Latest Responses

3 respondents (60%) answered **information** for this question.



48. Please share any feedback or ideas that would have improved Operational Area Coordination and Communication. Please focus on public health coordination.

[More Details](#)

 Insights

8

Responses

Latest Responses

"No face to the EOC OA Liaison email address."

2 respondents (29%) answered **Public Health** for this question.



49. [For OA partners only] What type of data or resources did your organization or jurisdiction lack throughout the response? Please be as detailed as possible.

[More Details](#)

 Insights

7

Responses

Latest Responses

2 respondents (29%) answered **County** for this question.



50. Did you notice any strengths in utilization of non-traditional partners? If so, please describe.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

6

Responses

Latest Responses

1 respondents (17%) answered **resources and teams** for this question.

**circumstances responsive information for the population**  
**strong awareness of resources support in Mixteco MICOP**  
**private sector resources and teams local hospital profits**  
**sector is best large POD info POD more flexible easier**  
**partnership chamber outreach efforts community**

51. Were you assigned a role in the **County Joint Information** AND/OR did you provide direct support to **County Public Information efforts**?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

- Yes 14
- No 50





52. Frequent changes made it difficult to know if I was working with the most up-to-date information.

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	3
● Somewhat agree	7
● Neither agree nor disagree	1
● Somewhat disagree	1
● Strongly disagree	2



53. For what portion of the incident was it clear who was in charge?

[More Details](#)

● 75-100%	6
● 50-75%	7
● 25-50%	0
● 0-25%	1



54. The County's reliance upon outside contractors for website management delayed, challenged, or inhibited the flow and timeliness of information. (Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	3
● Somewhat agree	5
● Neither agree nor disagree	1
● Somewhat disagree	1
● Strongly disagree	1



---

55. I felt that the County of Santa Barbara provided the public with current, timely, and accurate information to related to COVID-19.

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	5
● Somewhat agree	5
● Neither agree nor disagree	3
● Somewhat disagree	1
● Strongly disagree	0



---

56. I had all resources and access necessary to complete my duties within the Joint Information Center (JIC).

[More Details](#)

● Strongly agree	5
● Somewhat agree	7
● Neither agree nor disagree	2
● Somewhat disagree	0
● Disagree	0



57. What resources or access would have improved your experience in the JIC?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

5

Responses

Latest Responses

2 respondents (40%) answered **JIC** for this question.

**earlier releases**      **better food**    **Short notice**  
**EPI team**    **JIC**    **data**      **ripple effect**  
**health orders**    **times**    **new information**  
**planning meetings**

58. Did you have a role in **Community and Business Recovery Coordination** AND/OR were you invited to the Facilitated Discussion on **Community and Business Recovery Coordination**?

[More Details](#)


 Yes      11  
 No      53








---

59. Frequent changes made it difficult to know if I was working with the most up-to-date information.

[More Details](#)

 Insights




 Strongly agree	8
 Somewhat agree	22
 Neither agree nor disagree	21
 Somewhat disagree	4
 Strongly disagree	3



---

60. To what extent did you feel that decisions were data-driven?

[More Details](#)




 Decisions were mostly based ...	29
 Decisions were somewhat bas...	27
 Decisions were not at all base...	2



---

61. To what extent did you feel that decisions were equitable and fair?

[More Details](#)






 Decisions were very equitable ...	20
 Decisions were somewhat equ...	33
 Decisions were not at all equit...	5



62. What type of organization do you work for?

[More Details](#)




 Insights

 Sector association	0
 Business	3
 Non-profit	6
 Government	44
 Other	5



63. How supported did you feel by the County?




[More Details](#)

 Greatly supported	25
 Somewhat supported	24
 Not at all supported	2



64. How supported did you feel by the Public Health Department?

[More Details](#)

 Greatly supported	22
 Somewhat supported	24
 Not at all supported	4



65. Beyond Reopening in Safe Environment (RISE) emails and ambassadors, what additional recommendations do you have for the County to reach businesses?

[More Details](#)

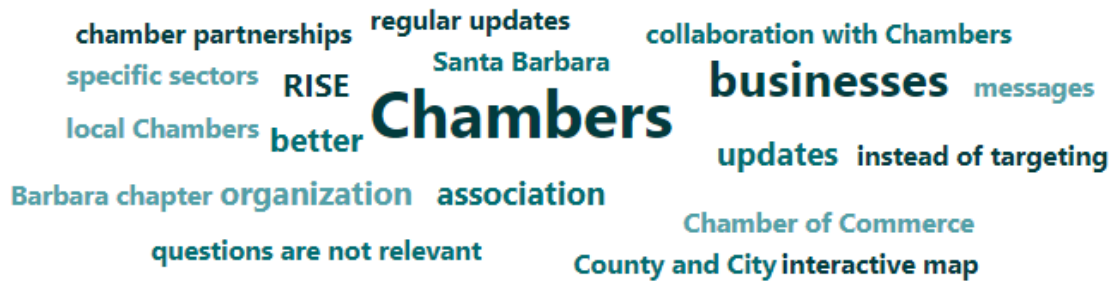
 Insights

18

Responses

Latest Responses

4 respondents (22%) answered **Chambers** for this question.



66. If you engaged with RISE ambassadors, how beneficial was this resource (where 1 is not beneficial, 3 is neutral, and 5 is very beneficial)? (Skip if not applicable).

[More Details](#)

 Insights

20

Responses

3.95

Average Number

67. To what extent did the County provide adequate resources to support employees in your sector (where 1 is inadequate, 3 is neutral, and 5 is very adequate)?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

37

Responses

3.54

Average Number

68. What could have improved your experience as part of the COVID-19 response efforts?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

31

Responses

Latest Responses

*"un-assign those individuals that did not want to be assigned or part ...*

*"More drills going into the event "*

7 respondents (24%) answered **leadership** for this question.



69. What was the most challenging part of your COVID-19 response efforts?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Latest Responses

38

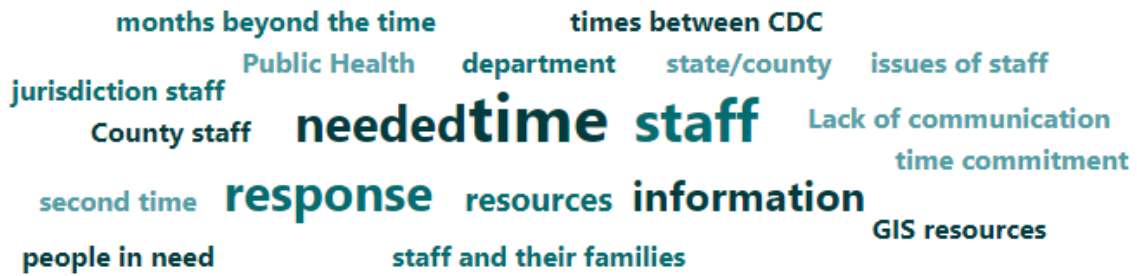
Responses

"Some individuals working in the EOC and those assigned to the EOC ...

"Ever changing event "

"Dealing with uncertainty and changing restrictions. "

8 respondents (23%) answered **time** for this question.



70. What was the most rewarding part of your COVID-19 response efforts?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Latest Responses

37

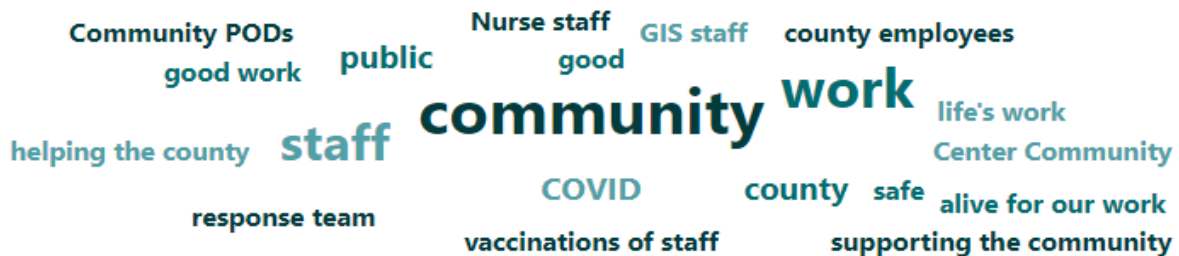
Responses

"Working with those individuals assigned to the EOC that took respon...

"Ever changing event that we continued to work together on."

"Developed and strengthened relationships with partner agencies. "

10 respondents (29%) answered **community** for this question.





# County of Santa Barbara COVID-19 After-Action Report Survey on Continuity

**This survey was sent to 101 individuals specifically involved in the County’s COOP throughout the COVID-19 response, received 32 responses, resulting in a 32% response rate.**

“The goal of this survey is to capture information on the County of Santa Barbara's COVID-19 response efforts, including successes and opportunities for improvement.

Questions are based on topics identified through a document review process and a series of discussions with stakeholders and are customized to the role of respondents. This survey provides an opportunity to share your feedback on the County’s response efforts.

Hagerty Consulting will use the information gathered to create an After-Action Report to ensure the County reviews its response and identifies how the County may be able to improve response to future emergencies to best serve the community.

Please answer all questions to the best of your knowledge and with complete honesty. All participants and responses will remain anonymous. This survey is estimated to take no more than seven minutes to complete.”

1. For what portion of the incident was it clear who was in charge?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

75%-100%	20
50%-75%	10
25%-50%	1
0%-25%	1



2. Frequent changes made it difficult to know if I was working with the most up-to-date information.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Strongly agree	13
Somewhat agree	12
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1



3. Prior to COVID-19, did your department have or use a Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan? (Skip if not applicable.)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	14
Somewhat	3
No	1
Unsure	11



4. How clear was the COOP pre-planning process (who submits the plan, who tracks edits to the plan, who is responsible for the plan)?

[More Details](#)

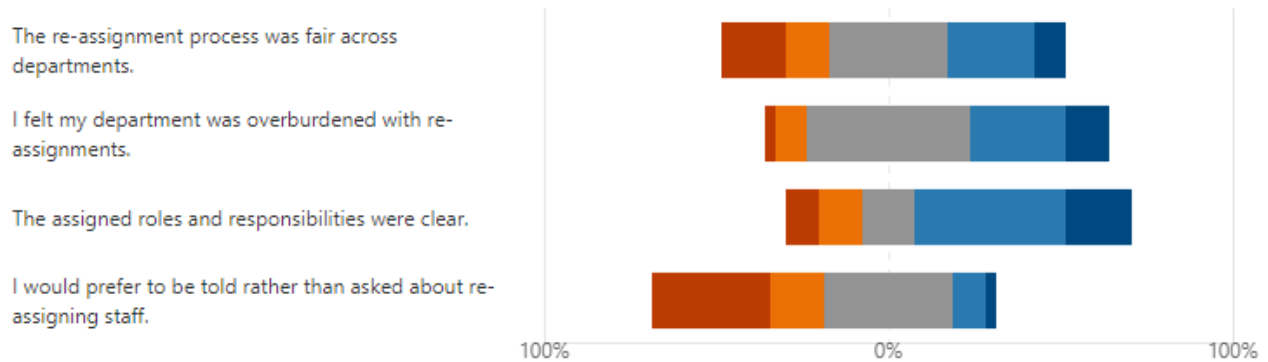
● Very clear	11
● Somewhat clear	13
● Unclear	6



5. Regarding the **staff re-assignment process**, please share the extent to which you agree with each statement:

[More Details](#)

■ Strongly disagree  
 ■ Somewhat disagree  
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
 ■ Somewhat agree  
 ■ Strongly agree



6. In my opinion, it is clear that all County employees understand their obligations as Disaster Service Workers.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● Agree	13
● Neither Agree Nor Disagree	9
● Disagree	10

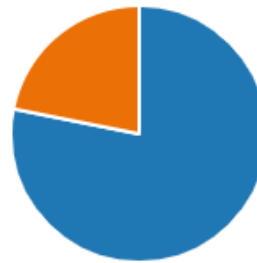


7. Were Paid Time Leave (PTL) and other leave concepts adequately explained to your department?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● Yes	25
● No	7



8. Did your department and staff have the resources needed to work remotely?


[More Details](#)

● Yes	29
● No	3



10. What training or skills do you wish you had possessed to support your department's operations in the County of Santa Barbara's COVID-19 response?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

15

Responses

Latest Responses

"None"

*"Realistic guidance and support related to the continuity of operations..."*

3 respondents (23%) answered **Training** for this question.



# Appendix C: Acronyms and Abbreviations

This section identifies the acronyms and abbreviations used throughout the Report.

Acronyms and Abbreviations	Definition
AAR	After-Action Report
ACS	Alternate Care Site
Brown Act	<i>Ralph M. Brown Act</i>
Cal OES	California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services
CDC	United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CEO	County Executive Office / County Executive Officer
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
COG	Continuity of Government/Continuity of Governance
COOP	Continuity of Operations
County, the County	County of Santa Barbara
CSD	Community Services Department
DOC	Department Operations Center
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FE	Functional Exercises
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GS	General Services Department
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability
HR	Human Resources Department
ICP	Incident Command Post
ICS	Incident Command System
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
IMAT	Incident Management Assistance Team

Acronyms and Abbreviations	Definition
IMT	Incident Management Team
IP	Improvement Plan
JDA	Joint Decision-Making Authority
JIC	Joint Information Center
MAC	Multi-Agency Coordination
MACS	Multi-Agency Coordination Systems
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding / Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OA	Operational Area
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
PA	Public Assistance
PHD	Public Health Department
PIO	Public Information Officer
POD	Point of Dispensing
PSPS	Public Safety Power Shutoffs
PW	Public Works Department
<b>Report, the Report</b>	<i>County of Santa Barbara Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan</i>
RISE	Reopening in a Safe Environment
SEMS	Standardized Emergency Management System
TTY	Telephone Relay
VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
UC	Unified Command
US	United States