

Response to Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report:

Public Safety Radio Coverage

Report Summary

- Published June 19, 2017
- The Grand Jury released their report “Public Safety Radio Coverage”, which contains the results of their review of the status and issues with County’s current public safety radios.
- The Board of Supervisors are named as a responder to Findings 3 and 4, as well as Recommendations 3 and 4.

Finding 3

- “The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Deputies in the Cuyama area are operating in a rural area with extremely poor radio communications.”

The Board partially disagrees with the finding.

Approximately two-thirds of Cuyama Valley is covered by transmissions. An additional site in the Cuyama area would provide stronger signals and more complete coverage.

Recommendation 3

- “That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office join with the Santa Barbara County and Ventura County Fire Departments in the installation of a radio tower to be located in Kern County that will ensure that all agencies are able to communicate throughout the Cuyama area.”

The recommendation will not be implemented:

There are several options, not involving Kern or Ventura counties, including establishing a new transmission site in Santa Barbara County at Fire Station 41, or on a more elevated platform utilizing privately owned property, or develop the Pelato Peak site, which would be the most effective solution to provide coverage for the Cuyama area.

Finding 4

- “Most public safety agencies in Santa Barbara County are not using the 700 MHz radio band.”

The Board agrees with the finding:

Recommendation 4

- “That Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors upgrade all Santa Barbara County public safety radios to the 700 MHz band as recommended by the Federal Communications Commission and the State of California.”

The recommendation will not be implemented.

- The County has started a comprehensive Public Radio System Upgrade Project. An RFP was issued and is currently being evaluating. When selected, the vendor will identify the County’s needs while maintaining connectivity with its mutual aid partners. Moving to the 700 MHz band option will be one of several options under consideration. This is a long-term, multi-year project that will require substantial analysis and funding.

Recommended Actions:

- a) Consider and adopt responses in Attachment A as the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2016-2017 Grand Jury report entitled "Public Safety Radio Coverage", Attachment B;
- b) Authorize the Chair to sign a response letter and forward the responses to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court (Attachment A); and
- c) Determine pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15378(b)(5) that the above actions are not a project subject to CEQA review, because it is a government administrative activity that does not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.