

LATE  
DIST



Office of the Sheriff

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

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**Carpinteria**  
 5775 Carpinteria Avenue  
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**Isla Vista**  
 6504 Trigo Road  
 Isla Vista, CA 93117  
 Phone (805) 681-4179

**Lompoc**  
 3500 Harris Grade Road  
 Lompoc, CA 93436  
 Phone (805) 737-7737

**New Cuyama**  
 70 Newsome Street  
 New Cuyama, CA 93254  
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**Santa Maria**  
 812-A W. Foster Road  
 Santa Maria, CA 93455  
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**Solvang**  
 1745 Mission Drive  
 Solvang, CA 93463  
 Phone (805) 686-5000

**Sheriff - Coroner Office**  
 66 S. San Antonio Road  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93110  
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**Main Jail**  
 4436 Calle Real  
 Santa Barbara, CA 93110  
 Phone (805) 681-4260

**COURT SERVICES  
CIVIL OFFICES**

**Santa Barbara**  
 1105 Santa Barbara Street  
 P.O. Box 690  
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**Santa Maria**  
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 Santa Maria, CA 93456  
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**HEADQUARTERS**  
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**BILL BROWN**  
 Sheriff - Coroner

**SOL LINVER**  
 Undersheriff

November 15, 2021

Dear CEO Miyasato,

I write to restate the Sheriff's Office's strong opposition to the splitting of 9-1-1 dispatch services in order to create a Regional Fire Dispatch Center, and I ask you to reconsider doing so.

There are some very compelling reasons against the separation of our county's 911 dispatch functions.

**Proven History**

As you know, the women and men assigned to our current, multi-disciplinary public safety dispatch center have proven themselves time and time again in handling day-to-day as well as major critical incidents. Over the past 44 years the current Public Safety Dispatch Center has handled multiple brushfires and other disastrous incidents, including the recent Alisal Fire, the Thomas Fire and related debris flow, the Refugio oil spill, the Isla Vista mass murders and the Deltopia civil disturbance incident. All of these occurrences required coordinated dispatching, communications and status management between each of our public safety disciplines: law enforcement, fire services and emergency medical services. Time and again having dispatchers for all three disciplines in the same room and able to communicate with each other – directly, face to face and in real time – proved to be beneficial and life-saving. Having a consolidated dispatch center was a key ingredient to the exemplary handling of these calamitous events. History has proven there is no need for separate dispatch services given the extraordinary skills, talents and track record of our current dispatch staff.

**Consolidated Dispatch = Costs Savings To Taxpayers**

One of the most compelling reasons for multi-disciplinary dispatch consolidation is cost savings. Significant capital funding will be necessary for the construction and equipping of a secondary regional fire dispatch center, and significantly increased and ongoing annual costs to operate two separate county centers and three city-based PSAP's will be a byproduct of such a center. These expenses will place a significant burden on the county's and the cities' limited public safety

budgets during uncertain and volatile economic times. Rather than create efficiencies, the move duplicates services and increase costs unnecessarily.

The minimum costs to create a regional fire dispatch center are as follows:

One Time Capital Expenses	
• Construction & equipping	\$11 Million
Ongoing Additional Annual Expenses	
• Santa Barbara County	\$1,136,384
• City of Santa Barbara	\$ 756,261
• City of Santa Maria	\$ 712,776
• City of Lompoc	\$ 315,857
• Carpinteria Summerland FPD	\$ 167,751
• Montecito FPD	\$ 113,448
• City of Guadalupe	\$ 77,222
Total additional annual expenses	\$3,279,699 (estimate)

Most of the cities within the county have passed additional sales taxes to at least partially fund public safety needs. The county has no such prospect for revenue enhancement in the near future and thus has been placed in a financially disadvantageous position. Now is simply not the time to commit to the spending of millions of dollars in capital and ongoing annual expenses that are not necessary.

The Deltawrx report submitted to Santa Barbara County identified a 25% *increase* in collective staffing if the current dispatch operation is separated. In contrast, a Deltawrx report for Chittenden County, Vermont, identified a 15% *decrease* in staff required for a consolidated dispatch center. Another major consideration is that our dispatch center is already competing for qualified staff with five other dispatch centers within Santa Barbara County, thus approval of the Regional Fire Center would add yet another center competing for both call takers and dispatchers.

#### **Closest Resource Dispatching Does Not Require Regional Fire Dispatch**

Borderless dispatching has been mentioned as a primary reason for dispatch separation. That is a myth. Our existing dispatch center is fully capable of borderless dispatching, and plans are already underway to incorporate closest resource dispatching into our current Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. This concept is in no way dependent upon a new regional fire dispatch center.

#### **The National Trend is to Consolidate, Not De-Consolidate**

For many reasons, the current trend for public safety dispatch centers across the nation and throughout California is to consolidate, not to de-consolidate.

We in the Sheriff's Office do not believe you have been provided enough facts about the benefits of consolidation and the liabilities of dispatch separation. At the same time Deltawrx

was working on its report for Santa Barbara County, they were preparing another report for Chittenden County, Vermont, titled, "Dispatch Consolidation Roadmap." This report articulated the many advantages of consolidation that *were not* included in the report you relied upon in providing direction to explore the separation of our dispatch services. In the Chittendon County report, Deltawrx wrote that, "consolidated public safety dispatching services improves the efficiency with which resources are dispatched to life threatening emergencies." The report also indicated that emergency call times could be cut up to 71 seconds based on a survey of 16,000 calls.

The report further identified other important benefits of consolidation:

- Facilitation of interagency communication
- Cross trained staff to ease the burden of providing round-the-clock shift coverage
- Sharing of capital costs
- Improved likelihood of obtaining grants and federal funding that supports interoperability

### **Life Threatening Delays When Seconds Count**

Despite our great respect for our colleagues in the Fire services, we strongly disagree with the notion that separation will provide a better level of public safety service for members of the public. In reality, the opposite is true. The delay and inefficiency that will be built into the delivery of service by adding a secondary Public Safety Answering Point will require precious additional time to interview the caller, extract information and dispatch appropriate resources. As mentioned above, one community believed that they would decrease their call time by 71 seconds as a result of *consolidated* dispatch services, and this was under ideal situations.

Please understand that there are frequent occasions where callers are upset, confused or so excited by the underlying circumstances of the 911 call that dispatchers are unable to initially decipher what is happening, or where it is happening. Time must be spent calming the caller and extracting the vital information. Transferring such callers to another dispatch center, sometimes twice if the CHP dispatch center is called initially, will further increase their anxiety and extend the amount of time it takes to determine and dispatch the appropriate emergency resources, in some cases by several minutes.

The county's current dispatch center's average time from when a 911 call is picked up to when it is placed in the dispatcher queue is 38 seconds, 90% of the time. Currently, Fire and EMS calls are generally dispatched within 60 seconds. It will take roughly another 58 seconds for a transfer call to be answered by the proposed regional fire center from the time a caller dialed 911. This is calculated as it takes, on average, 10 seconds to answer the call, plus 38 seconds to obtain the correct address and the nature of the problem, and another 10 seconds for the next center to answer the transferred call. Thus, it will take approximately twice as long – 118 seconds – to dispatch services to the emergency under the regional fire dispatch model.

Such delays in dispatching emergency resources are especially troublesome given the stellar record of cardiac arrest survival rates in our county. The 2020 County of Santa Barbara EMS Agency Year in Review document lists the cardiac arrest survival rates for our county as outperforming the national average over the past three years by an average of 7% each year. Do

we really want to build a system that will inevitably impact such achievements negatively, thereby diminishing public safety?

**Consider Only Separating Fire Dispatch and Not Emergency Medical Services**

If, despite our grave concerns, the Board still wishes to move forward with dispatch separation, I ask you to consider splitting off *only* the Fire dispatch component and keeping EMS dispatching within the current Public Safety Dispatch Center. This would still allow us to complete timely and *uninterrupted* Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) at the county's Primary Public Safety Answering Point. It would not increase the amount of call time before Emergency Medical Dispatching is initiated and emergency medical services are dispatched. It provides for no delays or premature call transfers in the dispatching of multi-disciplinary calls, such as traffic accidents, assaults with injuries, shootings, stabbings, etc. This model has been used successfully in adjacent San Luis Obispo County for over 30 years.

**Conclusion**

When compared with the siloed services that existed prior to its creation in the late 1970's, Santa Barbara County's current consolidated Public Safety Dispatch Center represents a significant modernization of our county's ability to efficiently and effectively provide critical emergency services to the people of Santa Barbara County. We feel separating Sheriff, Fire and EMS dispatching would be a step backward. We are currently blessed to have such an outstanding group of men and women currently serving as our Public Safety Dispatchers and Call Takers. Despite being understaffed and under-resourced for years, they have consistently provided exemplary service to our communities, often under the most challenging of circumstances. We believe strongly that our dispatch services should remain together.

I urge you to reconsider dispatch separation and instead, for a fraction of the cost, provide some additional staff and technology resources to our proven operation. This would make an already excellent dispatch system even better.

Sincerely,



BILL BROWN  
Sheriff-Coroner

- c: Supervisor Bob Nelson
- c: Supervisor Joan Hartmann
- c: Supervisor Gregg Hart
- c: Supervisor Steve Lavagnino
- c: Supervisor Das Williams