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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 1, 2020

Honorable Michael J. Carrozzo
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara CA 93101

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report titled, "Public Alerts for Public Safety Power Shutoffs and Emergencies" published June 10, 2020.

Judge Carrozzo:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

The Board appreciates the work conducted by the Office of Emergency Management for their assistance in responding to this matter.

Sincerely,

Gregg Hart, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

CC: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Attachment

**Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2018-2019 Report
“Public Alerts For Public Safety Power Shutoffs and Emergencies”**

Finding 1a

Residents who do not comprehend either English or Spanish are at risk of not understanding PSPS warnings.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) provides all notifications in English and Spanish, as well as translations on our websites and social media. Although not a notification system, OEM also works with 211 to answer community phone calls and concerns. 211 has the ability to support community members with 150+ languages.

Each of the utilities also provide information in various languages for both notification and materials on their website.

	SCE	PG&E
PSPS Notification Calls	Customers cannot preselect a preferred language. The phone call includes “Press 2 for Spanish” etc. 1. English 2. Spanish 3. Korean 4. Cantonese 5. Mandarin 6. Tagalog 7. Vietnamese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifications available in 8 languages and are sent directly in languages where users have set a preference. • All English notifications have a way to get to an in-language option • Customers can press * to be transferred to PG&E’s call center to connect with an interpreter • Language line with interpreters available in 250 languages
PSPS Texts and Emails	In English with a link to their website for other languages. Same languages as above.	In English with a link to their website for other languages. Same languages as below.
Wildfire/PSPS website	Same languages as above.	1. English 2. Spanish 3. Chinese 4. Vietnamese 5. Tagalog 6. Korean 7. Russian
Additional Notes	Working to expand to 15 most common languages in their service area.	Working to expand to 14 most common languages in their service area.

Finding 1b

Residents whose electricity accounts are held by landlords or property managers are at risk of not receiving the PSPS warnings sent by their power company.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding. At the time of this report, it was accurate that only the utility account holder would receive notifications from the Utility. This often meant that individuals within

mobile home parks or other such master account residential or businesses would not receive a notification from the utility. However, both utilities have implemented a program to allow residents to register for notifications regardless of who pays the utility bill. Additionally, OEM also utilizes ReadySBC to notify residents impacted by a potential or actual PSPS event. Residents are encouraged to register for notifications with their utility and ReadySBC:

- **SCE:** <https://www.sce.com/wildfire/psps-alerts>
- **PG&E:** https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/your-account/account-management/manage-your-account/alerts-and-notifications/update-your-contact-information.page?WT.mc_id=Vanity_mywildfirealerts
- **County Notifications:** www.ReadySBC.org

Recommendation 1

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct and fund the Office of Emergency Management to update and improve its contact lists and communication methods to maximize the likelihood that all residents will receive the PSPS warnings or advice they need.

This recommendation has been implemented. OEM continually reviews and makes improvements to its contacts list, notification processes and systems, including specific recommendations and lessons learned from 2019 PSPS events. It is important to note, that the ultimate responsibility for notification rests with the utility companies. OEM has taken several steps to ensure that appropriate notification has taken place. These include:

- Residents need to self-register their contact information and update their information on occasion at www.ReadySBC.org
- The Sheriff's Dispatch Office receives what is called E911 Data (landline telephone phone numbers) regularly and updates the ReadySBC notification system with those phone numbers.
- OEM is aware of recent revisions to California Government Code that allow the County to enter into agreements with power utilities, mobile phone providers, universities and social service agencies to receive customer/client contact information for the purposes of emergency notifications. OEM is integrating those revisions into our operational planning.

Finding 2

Residents who depend on electricity for vital medical devices or to keep medications refrigerated may not receive the PSPS or emergency notifications intended for them.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding. All residents who depend on electricity for critical medical equipment or needs are encouraged to register for their power utilities Medical Baseline or equivalent program, which includes additional notifications for PSPS events.

SCE: <https://www.sce.com/residential/assistance/medical-baseline>

PG&E: https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/save-energy-money/help-paying-your-bill/longer-term-assistance/medical-condition-related/medical-baseline-allowance/medical-baseline-allowance.page?WT.mc_id=Vanity_medicalbaseline

Recommendation 2

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct and fund the Office of Emergency Management and the Department of Public Health to identify individuals dependent on electricity for essential medical needs.

This recommendation has been implemented. There are several different programs or offices that work together in emergencies and PSPS events to identify those individuals who may be more vulnerable to an event and more specifically a PSPS event. The County Public Health Department works with various local, state and federal social services and public health-based programs to identify those who may be vulnerable in a disaster. Additionally, the Tri-Counties Independent Living Resource Center (ILRC), who works with access and functional needs individuals, as well as Seniors, has started to facilitate a data base of their clients who may need additional assistance in a disaster or PSPS event. The OEM is coordinating with ILRC on how the County can support their efforts. PG&E has created a new online database and resource center for emergency planning and response coordination, in which County OEM has access to a list of those individuals who have registered for their medical baseline program. SCE will provide their medical baseline and critical care customer lists to OEM at the time of an event.

Finding 3

Residents who depend on electricity for essential medical devices, keeping medications refrigerated, or other vital needs may not be able to carry out the PSPS or emergency recommendations intended for them.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding. It is recommended that residents dependent on electricity for medical purposes should take extra steps to prepare in advance for an emergency or potential PSPS event. Some of those recommendations can be found at the following websites:

- ReadySBC: <https://readysbc.org/pmps/>
- ILRC: <https://www.ilrc-trico.org/pmps/>

Additionally, both Utilities have implemented some rebate programs that may assist individuals in purchasing some backup power options for PSPS events.

- SCE (All rebates): <https://www.sce.com/residential/rebates-savings/rebates>
- SCE (Power-Specific Rebates): <https://marketplace.sce.com/portable-power-stations/>
- PG&E Home Rebate Program and Application: https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/save-energy-money/savings-solutions-and-rebates/how-to-apply/how-to-apply.page
- PG&E Business Rebate Program and Catalogs: https://www.pge.com/en_US/small-medium-business/save-energy-and-money/rebates-and-incentives/product-rebates.page

Recommendation 3

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct and fund the Office of Emergency Management and the Department of Public Health to ensure the access of individuals dependent on electricity for survival to the supplies and locations recommended for them on County websites.

This recommendation will be implemented. The OEM is working with ILRC and the Public Health Department on how to support ILRC in the distribution of those resources during an actual event. It is important to note, that if a large PSPS event were to occur there are only limited supplies available for

distribution. The completion of this recommendation is dependent on developing a reliable source of appropriate supplies.

In regards to PSPS community support facilities provided by the utilities during an actual event, both utilities are working to identify facilities to support residents during a PSPS event, as well as the modifications needed to these facilities or their operational plans to account for the current COVID environment. This is an on-going coordination effort with the utilities, PHD, local agencies and OEM.

Finding 4

Santa Barbara County's emergency information and advice for the public is scattered over several websites, which are not coordinated, infrequently updated, sometimes confusing, and may not link to each other.

The Board of Supervisors disagree partially with the finding. All general information related to PSPS and emergency planning, as well as actual events, can be found at www.ReadySBC.org as a one-stop website. The Board acknowledges that some gaps in information were identified last year regarding the types and depth of information individuals may need to support their individual preparedness and response to PSPS. The OEM took a proactive approach to any gaps identified and made improvements to the website throughout the PSPS season.

Additionally, it is recognized that ReadySBC was initially developed to support the community's recovery from the Thomas Fire and the 1-9 Debris Flow, and that it is time to transition the website to a more comprehensive planning, response and recovery tool. This transition continues to occur with improvements being made for both COVID-19 recovery information, as well as overall all-hazard information improvements to layout, content and accessibility. It is important to note, that there are several other County Departments that have a direct emergency response mission (Public Health Department, Sheriff's Office, Fire Department, Flood Control Division, etc.) and therefore information on their website. The OEM continues to work with partner departments and agencies to standardize information across websites and to ensure current links and information is shared regularly.

Recommendation 4

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct and fund the Office of Emergency Management to ensure that all County websites providing emergency information are coordinated, easy to understand and navigate, regularly updated, and use clear links to each other to make all information readily accessible.

This recommendation will be implemented. As noted above, many improvements to the www.ReadySBC.org website have already occurred. Additionally, the OEM will be utilizing some California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) PSPS grant funds to develop additional improvements to website and community education information, resources and accessibility. Lastly, General Services is facilitating an update of all county websites. The OEM is participating in this update effort and will leverage this opportunity to facilitate emergency information updates and standardization of language and links across multiple departments.

Finding 5

PSPS decisions are made entirely by the power companies without input from public agencies and elected officials until after the shutdown ends, via the California Public Utilities Commission.

The Board of Supervisors disagree partially with the finding. Power utilities can and often unilaterally determine whether to initiate a PSPS event and to shut off power. The CPUC ruled that the power utilities must take into consideration input and concerns of local first responders and emergency management, which they have done to let us know that a PSPS may be occurring.

Recommendation 5

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors publicly urge the State of California legislature to require local governmental input into PSPS decisions before they are announced and carried out.

This recommendation has been implemented. The OEM in conjunction with County Counsel's office works with the CPUC on their rule making process on an ongoing basis, to promote better coordination with local government. Although the Utilities are not required to agree or follow local emergency responder recommendations, the utilities are more open to information sharing, coordination and advance planning for events than they have been in the past.