

EP 8/25/11

JANESTOWN FIRE DIST. E

August 22, 2011

FILED  
AUG 23 2011  
Superior Court of California  
County of Tuolumne

BY *Jayne Barnes*  
Clerk

The Honorable Eric L. DuTemple  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
41 W. Yaney Street  
Sonora, Ca. 95370

Re: Response to 2010-11 Grand Jury Findings & Recommendations-Future  
Of Fire Safety in Tuolumne County

Dear Judge DuTemple:

The following is the response related to the Future of Fire Safety in Tuolumne County section of the 2010-11 Grand Jury Report as requested and required pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05. Below you will find listed each Grand Jury finding or recommendation followed by responses to each.

**Grand Jury Findings**

- 1. Combining all existing Tuolumne County fire districts and departments under a single management structure would address the following:
  - (a) Improvement must be made in the use of currently available funding. Having a paid staff-member of Fire Chief status in multiple districts and Departments is increasing costs unnecessarily.

**Response:** *Agree*

- (b) Training and equipment is not consistent among districts and departments.

**Response:** *Disagree.* Each department sends new firefighters through the Joint Basic Firefighter Academy. The training received in the Joint Basic Fire Fighter Academy allows the cadet upon graduation, to apply for the California Office of the State Fire Marshal's, (OSFM) Fire Fighter I certification. The curriculum comes from the OSFM and every class has a lesson plan which allows every firefighter to receive the same training. The county fire department has participated with the other county fire departments in training for the new self contained breathing apparatus, (SCBA) which were purchased by each agency through a regional grant. This training was also completed for the rope rescue equipment purchased by every agency.

Tuolumne County Fire Department also trains with neighboring departments. Further consistency would be possible if all agencies came under one management structure.

(c) An inventory of County-wide resources, both human and equipment, would be a useful tool in addressing how to provide economical and efficient use of what is available.

**Response:** *Agree*

(d) Parochial attitudes are a barrier to change. Making sure future purchases of equipment and training of staff are compatible throughout the system will result in an emergency response capability and potential cost savings beneficial to everyone in the County, not just within a single district. Maintaining the integrity of current benefit assessments so that local taxpayers continue to receive what they voted to gain will be challenging to any proposal combining County-wide resources.

**Response:** *Agree*

(e) Renewal or renegotiation of the CAL Fire Contract must be done with flexibility in mind and with careful attention to administrative cost reduction.

**Response:** *Agree.* The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors have agreed to a three year agreement with Cal Fire. The Agreement was entered into in June of 2011.

2. The public's perception of emergency response is outdated. Actual fire related calls are a small portion of demand. The shift from firefighting to medical response is a large part of increased costs. New funding sources are required to meet the increasing demands for emergency response. Since most of this demand is likely to be in medical response, emphasis must be on how to address these expenses.

**Response:** *Agree*

3. Emergency dispatch is complicated. Centralization is needed now. The current dispatching system results in multiple actions necessary to send a response, (Appendix A), as well as errors in dispatching needed resources to the proper location. California Highway Patrol is the only available dispatch for 911 calls made from cellular phones.

**Response:** *Agree*

4. It is essential to educate the public about how their demand for services relates to cost. The public's expectation of service must be defined. What it costs to provide those services must be explained. Funding methods can then be established to provide that level of service.

**Response:** *Agree*

5. Volunteer numbers are declining due to several factors. An aging population, the demands on today's working families and discouragement from some professional firefighters are lesser issues. Training requirements appear to be the main obstacle to recruitment. Lack of opportunity to engage in actual fire fighting appears to be the primary obstacle to retaining volunteers because medical response is usually not their focus. Attrition will always be a factor. It is necessary that recruitment efforts remain constant.

**Response:** *Agree*

6. Some volunteer fire stations have a low response rate or are inactive. These stations mislead residents regarding safety-response times and may affect ISO ratings.

**Response:** *Agree*

7. The "Amador" Plan allows CAL Fire resources to be used for local structural fire protection during the non-fire season winter months.

**Response:** *Agree.* CAL FIRE is an "All Risk" fire department and responds to all emergencies.

8. Groveland Community Service District provides response outside its district's boundaries to Mariposa County. Mariposa County assists Groveland when necessary. This cooperation is essential to isolated and remote residents. It has 22 volunteers, successfully uses part-time employees, supports a ROP fire cadet program and has community appreciation activities.

**Response:** *Agree.*

9. Any centralization of responders will offer savings in some areas and increase costs in others. For some positions, personnel costs are likely to increase as "equal pay for equal work" will be a factor. There are many undefined benefits

CAL Fire provides in services and equipment that must be included in a cost analysis. The success of methods to save on maintenance, purchasing and other budget items will vary.

**Response:** *Agree*

## **Grand Jury Recommendations**

R1

(d) Set aside parochial attitudes and address economic reality by:

- using available dollars wisely through coordinated purchasing of supplies and equipment.

**Response:** *The recommendation has not been implemented.* Each fire agency in the county participates with the other agencies in regional grant opportunities. However, the coordination of purchasing on a countywide basis would only be possible if each agency agrees to form a single countywide fire agency. The Fire Districts and Fire Chiefs are meeting in a working group to discuss this subject.

- sharing maintenance of, and training personnel to use, all available Equipment.

**Response:** *The recommendation requires further analysis.* The maintenance and training of personnel on available equipment on a countywide basis would be possible but only if each agency agrees to form a single countywide fire agency. The Fire Study's working group is currently discussing the sharing of volunteers on a countywide basis.

- avoid unnecessary duplication of resources.

**Response:** *The recommendation requires further analysis.* A possible solution would be for each agency to enter into an agreement to send the closest resource to the incident without regard for the agency having jurisdiction. The Working Group is currently discussing this subject.

- standardize and coordinate training of volunteers.

**Response:** *The recommendation has not been implemented.* This would be possible if each agency agrees to form a single countywide fire agency.

At this point all training would come under one management agency which would then set training program goals and objectives.

- encourage volunteers to be County-wide responders.

**Response:** *The recommendation has been implemented.* The county fire department has always allowed the volunteers to respond county-wide to emergency incidents.

- share educational and public relations effort.

**Response:** *The recommendation requires further analysis.* There are discussions taking place in the Fire Study's Working Group and the Tuolumne County Chief's Association regarding this matter. I would agree the public needs to be educated on what fire departments are expected to do today. I believe the best way for this education could be given is to form a single wide county fire agency so a coordinated effort could go forward. Without it, I believe each agency would be left to accomplish this on their own.

#### R4

- The cooperative effort demonstrated by participation in the Tuolumne County Fire and First Responder Study is a good foundation for organizing and launching an educational public outreach program. The purpose of this program would be to explain what fire departments are expected to do today, how those demands have affected costs, the viability of volunteer-only stations, and the ongoing need for volunteers. Most importantly, the program should explain why change is necessary. That explanation would benefit from a clear presentation of how demand-for-service expectations relate to what the community can afford to provide. Once people understand that the level of service they expect cannot be provided with existing dollars, they will be more likely to support change.

**Response:** *The recommendation requires further analysis.* There are discussions taking place in the Fire Study's Working Group and the Tuolumne County Chief's Association regarding this matter. I would agree the public needs to be educated on what fire departments are expected to do today. I believe the best way for this education to be given is to form a single wide county fire agency so a coordinated effort could go forward. Without it, I believe each agency would be left to accomplish this on their own.

#### R5

- (c) Centralization of volunteer programs under a single leader would improve

the potential of gaining new recruits, make training consistent, provide expanded opportunity to participate in responses, and insure better retention of recruits. The program should make use of every good idea available from successful efforts throughout the County and elsewhere. In addition, this program might serve as a public-relations and education coordinator.

**Response:** *The recommendation requires further analysis.* The single leader concept will be possible through the formation of a single wide county fire organization. I anticipate discussions in the Fire Study's Working Group are relating to this subject this coming year.

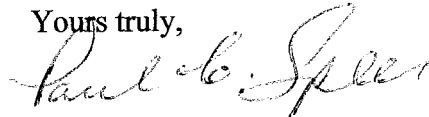
**R6**

All Tuolumne County responders should cooperate in a strategy to improve ISO ratings. Maintaining the existing ratings must be a priority. Water service suppliers are a vital part of this effort, their participation should be requested. Volunteer stations should be re-opened as soon as possible.

**Response:** *The recommendation has been implemented.* The Jamestown Fire District in cooperation with the Tuolumne County Fire Department has been working with neighboring departments in forming auto aid and mutual aid agreements. These agreements help improve the ISO Rating. I would also add the fire station in Jamestown is not closed. The station is staffed six months a year with CAL FIRE personnel and six months a year with volunteers.

I trust that the responses provided above are found to be fully responsive to the findings and recommendations contained in the 2010-11 Grand Jury Report.

Yours truly,



Paul G. Speer  
Assistant Chief

Jamestown Fire District