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# **NEW COMMITTEE**

# COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

## INTRODUCTION

The Compliance Committee was newly formed this term to ensure prompt and adequate follow-up to compelling safety issues identified by the 2002-03 Grand Jury that strongly indicated the county's e911 system was in need of evaluation and review. The specific issues identified are contained in the final reports of the Administration Committee, the Audit and Finance Committee, the Parks, Recreation and Public Works Committee, and were published as part of the 2002-03 Grand Jury Final Report.

## BACKGROUND

In response to the 2002-03 Grand Jury Final Report, the 2003-04 Grand Jury received: a letter from Sheriff Daniel A. Paranick, dated Sept. 15, 2003, with an enclosed letter, from Verizon, dated Sept. 10, 2003; a letter from the Mono County Board of Supervisors, dated Nov. 18, 2003; and a letter from Laretta L. Cochran, Auditor-Controller, dated May 7, 2004. At the end of April 2004, the grand jury sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors requesting an update to the responses provided in the board's Nov. 18 letter. This letter also requested the board to provide specific information as to the status of implementation of corrective measures taken to address identified deficiencies of the county's e911 system. Dave Wilbrecht, CAO, responded to the grand jury's letter via a memo dated May 19, 2004, which was received on June 7, 2004.

## FINDINGS

1. Potential failure of the e911 system is of concern. This concern became a reality when the optic fiber cable was cut in April 2004 causing the entire e911 system to go out of service due to a non-looped configuration with the connection to the south. On several occasions, the Sheriff has approached Verizon, requesting a connection to the north to create a loop, allowing the signal to be rerouted to other connections if broken, and thereby preventing failure of the e911 system. Verizon has refused, stating it would be cost prohibitive. As recently as the May 4, 2004, Board of Supervisors meeting, the Sheriff reported ongoing deficiencies concerning the status of the county's telephone system, and recommended the board move to a legislative approach to include the loop improvements in a revised tariff that allows Verizon to operate in the county. The Board of Supervisors discussed this recommendation at the May 7, 2004, Council of Governments meeting, where a vote was taken to address the problem with a regional approach. The Council of Governments is comprised of representatives from Inyo and Mono counties, Mammoth Lakes and Bishop. Staff has been assigned to follow up with this approach.

2. Safety issues concerning lack of signage on private roads and building numbers on private homes were identified, preventing or impairing emergency response personnel to locate residents and/or visitors in a timely manner. Staff has reviewed the county's codes and ordinances and has determined there is confusion regarding older buildings. The County Code is clear in its requirements for new construction, but less clear concerning its authority regarding existing and older construction. Recommendations to clarify the County Code will be presented to the board this summer. This has not been addressed yet due to lack of available resources, most likely as a result of relatively low professional salaries. The salary level will be increased as needed to

attract qualified candidates until the positions are filled. Implementation of the program to improve signage will also be problematic due to ongoing budget constraints that have been further aggravated by the state of California's budget deficit.

Public Works staff has developed a program to provide signage on private roads using county equipment, tools and materials. This is a voluntary, ongoing problem, relying primarily on local Regional Planning Advisory Committees to disseminate information to property owners. The property owner is responsible for installing signs and building numbers. A public education program will be needed to encourage people to improve signage, address and other emergency information.

3. Accuracy of the e911 database is of concern. Local fire departments, the Building Division and other agencies have been working in conjunction with Public Works staff to identify address discrepancies, primarily through the issuance of new building permits. Duplicate addresses are being revised in older developments with on-site inspections being done through inspections for construction. Staff working on the county Geographic Information System has identified 400 duplicate addresses in condominiums in the county, which have been corrected. Discrepancies are being corrected as they are reported; however, older addresses continue to be problematic due to budget constraints.

4. The need for a special health needs data base was identified. A system is in place through the Health Department to collect confidential information concerning special needs. The information is maintained in the county's GIS system. There are confidentiality concerns that need to be resolved, and once this is accomplished, information will be disbursed through the Sheriff's department as needed to the EMS system based on a call from a particular location. There are strict rules that prevent the county from distributing medical information for EMS's in-house use.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implementation of improvements to the county's e911 telephone connections be aggressively pursued by the Board of Supervisors until Verizon makes connections.

2. The county's codes and ordinances must be clarified so that the requirements for new and older construction are consistent. If necessary, new codes or ordinances must be adopted to ensure property owners are compliant in placing street signage and building numbers. The Board of Supervisors has ultimate responsibility to assure these steps are taken in the name of public safety.

3. Identification of duplicate addresses and address discrepancies in the e911 database must be an ongoing process. Due to the fact that older addresses within the county continue to be problematic, these addresses should be targeted until Public Works verifies their accuracy.

4. Issues relating to confidentiality concerns must be resolved to allow dissemination of special needs information through Sheriff's dispatch. Dispatch personnel should be instructed to continue asking pertinent questions to verify the accuracy of information displayed as to the identity and location of callers.

5. The Board of Supervisors needs to hold Verizon accountable for the moneys charged on individual phone bills for the e911 system.