

August 19, 2010

The Honorable Charles S. Crandall
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
San Luis Obispo County Superior Court
County Government Center, Room 385
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

RE: Grand Jury Report- Emergency Medical Response

Dear Judge Crandall:

I have reviewed the 2009-10 San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury Report regarding Emergency Medical Response in San Luis Obispo County. My response to their Finding and Recommendations are as follows:

Finding #2

The Sheriff's Dispatch Center is responsible for dispatching all ambulance and EMS helicopter service in the County.

The Sheriff disagrees in part with this finding.

The Sheriff's Dispatch Center "Med-Com" is responsible for the dispatching of all emergency ambulance and EMS Aircraft within the County. Dispatching and scheduling of ambulances and EMS aircraft for inter-facility transport is not the responsibility of the Sheriff's Dispatch Center.

Finding #3

The Grand Jury found confusion between the sheriff and Cal Fire dispatchers in the 911 calls reviewed. On the four 911 calls reviewed dispatchers refused incident commanders requests for a helicopter.

The Sheriff disagrees with this finding.

The Grand Jury has not identified the four calls out of approximately 22,000 medical aid calls dispatched annually to which they are referring. The Sheriff is not aware of any refusal to provide EMS aircraft to any incident commander. The policy regulating EMS aircraft dispatching was updated and implemented in May 2010, and addresses this issue directly.

Finding #7

Other counties in California have combined police and fire dispatch with reported improved communication.

The Sheriff cannot agree nor disagree with this finding.

Of the 58 counties, 25 have combined Fire and Sheriff dispatching. Only five counties with a population larger than San Luis Obispo, and only four with a larger area, have combined Fire and Sheriff dispatching. The combination appears to be utilized primarily by small counties.

Recommendation #2

Dispatchers must follow Policy 119 and not overrule an incident commander's request for an EMS helicopter.

The recommendation has been implemented.

The Sheriff requires compliance with policies, including EMSA Policy 119 and has provided direction to ensure compliance. Policy 119 was updated and implemented in May 2010 by the County Health Officer who is the final approval authority for EMS related policies and addresses this issue directly.

Recommendation #3

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff, SLOEMSA and the County Board of Supervisors should pursue combining sheriff and Cal Fire dispatch operation centers.

The recommendation requires further analysis.

The Sheriff has and will continue to explore a combined Fire and Sheriff dispatch center. This recommendation requires extensive analysis as a current location is not available to co-located dispatch services. When appropriate, the Sheriff will coordinate with Cal Fire and pursue funding from the Board of Supervisors for analysis and if studies indicate going further, for additional funding for a co-located dispatch center.

Sincerely,

Patrick Hedges
Sheriff-Coroner

c: San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury