

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

413



**FROM:** Executive Office

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
September 2, 2008

**SUBJECT: Response to the Grand Jury Report: Idyllwild Fire Protection District**

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Approve with or without modifications, the attached response to the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding the Idyllwild Fire Protection District.
- 2) Direct the Clerk of the Board to immediately forward the Board's finalized response to the Grand Jury, to the Presiding Judge, and the County Clerk-Recorder (for mandatory filing with the State).

**BACKGROUND:** On July 15, 2008, the Board directed staff to prepare a draft of the Board's response to the Grand Jury's report regarding the Idyllwild Fire Protection District.

Section 933 (c) of the Penal Code requires that the Board of Supervisors comment on the Grand Jury's recommendations pertaining to the matters under the control of the Board, and that a response be provided to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court within 90 days.

Departmental Concurrence

*Gary Christmas*

**GARY CHRISTMAS**  
Deputy County Executive Officer

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<b>FINANCIAL DATA</b>	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$ N/A	In Current Year Budget:
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$	Budget Adjustment:
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$	For Fiscal Year:

<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS:</b>	Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Requires 4/5 Vote	<input type="checkbox"/>

**C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:** APPROVE  
BY: *Bill Luna*  
County Executive Office Signature

- Dept's Recomm.:  Consent
- Per Exec. Ofc.:  Consent
- Policy
- Policy

**Riverside County Fire Department  
Response to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations  
Idyllwild Fire Protection District**

**FINDINGS**

**Number 1:**

*On October 10, 2006, an incident occurred regarding a sick child at the Idyllwild School (K-8). After calling '911', the school could not produce the current school year parental consent form. The school requested the sick child be transported to a hospital by Idyllwild Fire Department ambulance and paramedics.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 2:**

*Idyllwild Fire Department paramedics responded to a '911' call concerning the sick child at the Idyllwild School. Paramedics refused to transport the child to the hospital, as requested by the school principal who was in contact with the Hemet Unified School District nurse. The decision not to transport was made by paramedics without contacting an approved base or receiving hospital. Riverside County EMS Policy 5500 requires contact with a hospital base station before field personnel can clear a call. A written memorandum from EMS dated July 17, 2007, to paramedic provider agencies and hospitals regarding 'medical clearance' of patients in the field, further enforces this policy.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 3:**

*A scheduled meeting between the principal of the Idyllwild School, members of the Hemet Unified School District, and the Fire Chief for the Idyllwild Fire Department concerning the transporting of a sick child has not yet taken place. Several meetings were scheduled, however, for various reasons these meetings were cancelled by the Fire Chief, and not rescheduled by him.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 4:**

*The Grand Jury has determined, through a series of interviews, that members of the fire department and commission have attempted various forms of intimidation. The attempted intimidation occurred against individuals who spoke out against the department, department policy, or certain members of the fire department.*

*The following examples were obtained during sworn testimony:*

- *Members of the public have expressed that they felt intimidated at the Fire Commission Meetings due to the number of uniformed fire department personnel in attendance at a given meeting. Fire department personnel also made intimidating statements to attendees during and after the meeting.*
- *Members of the public have stated they felt intimidated by fire department vehicles repeatedly parking in front or near their homes or businesses for long periods of time and for no apparent reason.*
- *A business owner has testified that he felt threatened regarding actions taken over an on-going easement issue with the fire department, concerning access by fire apparatus.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 5:**

*The Idyllwild Fire Department has conducted practice burns without first obtaining a 'burn control number' from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD). This constitutes a violation of AQMD Rule 444, amended December 21, 2001. They also burned a vehicle in the spring of 2007, which is also a violation of AQMD policy. AQMD does not authorize a practice burn of any vehicle.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 6:**

*At the October 23, 2007 Board Meeting, the IFPD Board violated the Brown Act, Section 54957(b)(i), by discussing the Fire Chief's contract relating to compensation in closed session. The Brown Act only allows discussion in closed session of "the appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, discipline, or dismissal of a public employee".*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 7:**

*The Grand Jury learned, from testimony given by several expert witnesses, that due to the size of the department and the low volume of medical calls, it is difficult for the paramedics at the Idyllwild Fire Department to maintain their clinical assessment skills.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 8:**

*The Idyllwild Fire Department does not have a skilled grant writer, making it difficult to apply for the various grants available.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 9:**

*The fire department has been remiss in their security and validation of documents and records, as evidenced by the following examples:*

- *A former member of the fire department was accused of having falsified certifications, which were signed by the chief, but were dated prior to the chiefs employment by the fire department.*
- *Another member of the fire department was accused of removing documents from the department and releasing them to a third party. A police report was filed on this incident.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 10:**

*The fire department currently exists as an individual entity in a high fire risk area otherwise serviced by several county, state, and federal fire resources. This results in the need for numerous mutual aide incidents, both fire and medical, which can lead to a more complex response effort. This complexity adds a further element of risk for the residents of the mountain communities when a major emergency occurs.*

**Response:**

**Respondent agrees with the finding.**

The Riverside County Fire Department agrees with the finding.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Number 1:**

*The Idyllwild School must develop and implement a safeguard procedure to ensure they have signed parental consent forms on file for the current school year for all students attending the school.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 2:**

*The fire department must, in future cases involving pediatric patients where there is any question or disagreement on transport, contact a base station for direction. If no contact can be made, they must follow county EMS policy as, reinforced in an EMS memorandum dated July 17, 2007, and transport the patient. This practice will reduce both the health and liability risks to the patient and the fire department.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 3:**

*Both the Fire Chief and the Principal of the Idyllwild School must schedule a meeting. This meeting is necessary to formulate a joint policy on when, and by whose authority; a sick or injured student will be transported by ambulance to the hospital or emergency treatment center. In addition to the Fire Chief and the Principal of the school, other designated attendees must include representatives of the Hemet Unified School District and the President of the Idyllwild Fire District Commission.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 4:**

*The Fire Commission must direct the Fire Chief to conduct specific training sessions for fire department personnel to ensure understanding and compliance with department policy on interactions and relations with the public. Also, the fire department personnel and Commission members must remember that they are servants of the public and always conduct themselves in a professional manner, which reflects positively on themselves and the department.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 5:**

*The fire department must review current AQMD Policies and Procedures to ensure that they are in compliance with all policies and directives regarding practice burns.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 6:**

*The Commission members must review the Brown Act to ensure compliance at all future meetings. If the Commission has any questions regarding the Brown Act, they must confer with legal counsel prior to conducting the meeting.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 7:**

*The fire department must establish a program with local hospital emergency rooms for their paramedics to work with doctors and nurses to maintain and improve their clinical assessment skills. A second option would be to implement 'ride alongs' with busier departments to observe and assist with various medical emergency intervention procedures.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 8:**

*The fire department must identify an individual as their grant writer and send that individual to one or more of the various classes available on grant writing in order to maximize their potential for receiving grant monies.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 9:**

*The Commission, working together with the Fire Chief, must develop policies and procedures to ensure the security of all department documents and records. The president of the board must appoint a committee of at least two board members, who, with the Chief, would verify all certifications of department personnel to guarantee that they are authentic and current. The committee will report, in open session, the results of this inspection to the Commission. The commission must intensify its efforts to ensure that fire department personnel are compliant with their state and county certifications.*

**Response:**

**Response should be sought from affected agency/department.**

**Number 10:**

*The IFPD Commission, in conjunction with Riverside County Fire, Riverside County EMS, and representatives of CSA 38, must explore the feasibility of all fire and medical aide services in the Idyllwild/Pine Cove area being combined under one agency, Riverside County Fire Department.*

**Response:**

**The recommendation requires further analysis.**

The Riverside County Fire Department recognizes the importance of and agrees with the recommendation. County Fire understands and supports the value of an integrated, cooperative, regional fire protection system. As directed by the Grand Jury, County Fire will work with the identified agencies including the IFPD Commission to explore the feasibility of consolidation under County Fire.