

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

414



FROM: Executive Office

SUBMITTAL DATE:
September 2, 2008

SUBJECT: Response to the Grand Jury Report: Pine Cove Fire Incident

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Approve with or without modifications, the attached response to the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding the Pine Cove Fire Incident.
- 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 Pine Cove Fire Incident.

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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FINANCIAL DATA	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:

SOURCE OF FUNDS:	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 Bill Luna

Dept't Recomm.: Consent Policy
Per Exec. Ofc.: Consent Policy

**Riverside County Fire Department
Response to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations
Pine Cove Fire Incident**

FINDINGS

Number 1:

A structure fire occurred on State Highway 243 in Pine Cove on the evening of December 9, 2007. The Cal Fire relief crew at Pine Cove Station #23 was the first responder to the fire. The firefighters did not immediately utilize the engine's on-board computer and initially were unable to locate the nearest fire hydrant. This confusion led to a PCWD employee being unnecessarily called out to help locate the hydrant.

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

Firefighters working that date included some overtime members who were not totally familiar with the onboard computer or mobile data computer (MDC). There was also a problem with a civilian car blocking visual sight of one of the hydrants. In any event, the firefighters should have had a manual method for locating fire hydrants.

Number 2:

On the night of the structure fire, a Cal Fire, off-duty firefighter, called the PCWD and requested the assistance of a water district employee to aid in locating the nearest hydrant. The firefighter made this call from his home, based upon information he had gleaned listening to a scanner radio. The call to the PCWD was made without first confirming the need for assistance from the on-scene Incident Commander.

Response:

Respondent agrees with the finding.

CAL FIRE - County Fire was unable to ascertain this finding but realizes that it may have happened and that it is an important finding.

Number 3:

A PCWD employee responded to the request for assistance at the structure fire that night. When approaching the fire scene, he drove over a charged fire hose without authorization. This is a violation of California Vehicle Code §21708.

Response:

Response should be sought from affected agency/department.

Number 4:

The PCWD employee responded to the incident in his personal vehicle rather than his assigned district vehicle. This was not a violation of PCWD policy. However, his personal vehicle had no marking designating it as a district vehicle and also had no flashing amber light to be displayed when parked at the scene of an emergency.

Response:

Response should be sought from affected agency/department.

Number 5:

At the time of the Pine Cove fire incident, the Idyllwild Fire Department laid a fire hose across the road. This hose was poorly marked and not easily visible to on-coming traffic.

Response:

Respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

It is not always possible to not lay fire hoses across roadways. Fire will work to ensure that CAL FIRE – Riverside County Fire Department fire hoses are marked as well as are possible.

Number 6:

An Idyllwild firefighter, on that night, threw a trash can and hit the personal vehicle of the PCWD employee who had just driven over the fire hose. This firefighter's action resulted in damage to the employee's vehicle and a verbal confrontation with the district employee. Throwing an object at a moving vehicle is a misdemeanor violation of California Vehicle Code §23110.

Response:

Response should be sought from affected agency/department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Number 1:

The Cal Fire – Riverside County Fire Department Battalion Chief for the Pine Cove station must review the procedure to ensure assigned personnel and relief crews are proficient in the use of the engine's on-board computer in locating fire hydrants in the Pine Cove area.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

In addition to implementing the recommendation, County Fire recognizes the need for all personnel to both be familiar with the location of fire hydrants and for the availability of a manual map system to supplement the MDC. Additionally, CAL FIRE – Riverside County Fire is working with the Pine Cove Water District (PCWD) to better mark hydrants for quick locating at the time of an emergency.

Number 2:

Cal Fire must ensure personnel understand that no community service agencies are to be contacted for assistance unless authorized by the on-scene Incident Commander or other recognized authority.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

CAL FIRE - County Fire has advised all personnel of the importance of ensuring that all emergency incident communications are directed only through the normal chain of command and that means from incident workers to the Incident Commander for further dissemination to affected parties or the Perris Emergency Command Center (ECC).

Number 3:

The Manager of the PCWD must instruct all employees regarding the California Vehicle Codes §21707 - §21709, pertaining to vehicle operation around fire hoses and safety zones. Employees must be instructed not to proceed into an incident safety zone without authorization by an on-scene fire or police authority.

Response:

Response should be sought from affected agency/department.

Number 4:

PCWD must develop a policy requiring the use of district vehicles when responding to emergency situations. PCWD must install a permanent or portable amber light on all district vehicles. PCWD must provide to designated employees, a portable flashing amber light and a magnetic sign, to be displayed, if due to an emergency, they use their personal vehicle.

Response:

Response should be sought from affected agency/department.

Number 5:

The Idyllwild Fire Department must critique this incident and further define their procedure for marking a fire hose crossing a road to ensure it is visible to on-coming traffic. This will increase the safety factor for all personnel and equipment involved in the incident.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

CAL FIRE – Riverside County Fire does feels this finding is directed is to the Idyllwild Fire Protection District but does also recognize the general safety message of the finding. Fire will work to mark fire hoses near or across roadways using highly visible traffic cones. In some cases, though, this may not be possible.

Number 6:

The Idyllwild Fire Chief must instruct department personnel in the legal aspects of their actions, both physical and verbal, toward others and their personal property, while on duty.

Response:

Response should be sought from affected agency/department.