



Legislation Text

File #: 2022-0128, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors, County of Sonoma

Department or Agency Name(s): Emergency Management, Office of Equity

Staff Name and Phone Number: Chris Godley / 707-565-1152; Alegría De La Cruz / 707-565-8980

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan Update

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Resolution approving the Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan

Executive Summary:

Staff will present the proposed new Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that facilitates coordination between agencies and jurisdictions within Sonoma County while ensuring the protection of life, property, and the environment in the event of a major emergency incident or disaster. The EOP outlines the specific actions that the County and the Operational Area will carry out when an emergency exceeds or has the potential to exceed the capacity of a single agency or jurisdiction to respond. The EOP sets forth the organizational framework and addresses steps needed to safeguard the whole community - especially those most at-risk and those who have been historically underserved.

Development of the EOP included collaborative planning meetings with the Department of Emergency Management, the Office of Equity, and a Community Advisory Group to incorporate cultural responsiveness.

Discussion:

Background

Sonoma County is no stranger to emergency and disaster. Since the overwhelming Nuns/Tubbs Fires of October 2017, the County has experienced additional major wildfires, a major flood, large-scale evacuations, extreme temperature weather events, public safety power shutoffs, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the needs of residents and providing an effective response to disasters is a fundamental role of government.

The purpose of the EOP is to establish policies and procedures, assign responsibilities, and define the emergency management organization for the Sonoma County Operational Area. The primary audience for the EOP are County departments, cities, special districts, and community-based organizations that have a role in disaster response. The EOP may be of interest to the larger community as it explains the broad approach to how the County will respond in a disaster. The EOP is also supported by several hazard- or discipline-specific annexes. These annexes provide greater detail including coordinating procedures, agency responsibilities, and references that may be specific to a hazard such as Russian River flooding or an emergency response function such as Alert & Warning. These annexes may be updated more frequently than the EOP and can be found in

English and Spanish on the DEM department website at <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/DEM/Plans/>. As per Chapter 10 of County Code, the County develops/revises and adopts the EOP every five years in order to provide a uniform and flexible set of concepts and policies that maximize the capabilities of the full spectrum of government, community, non-profit, and private sector resources in times of major emergency or disaster. Recent disasters and the need to incorporate new state planning requirements has delayed development of this new EOP beyond the regular revision schedule.

Proposed EOP

Staff will present for the Board's consideration and adoption a new version of the Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The process to arrive at the recommended Plan included collaborative planning meetings with the Department of Emergency Management, the Office of Equity, and a Community Advisory Group to incorporate cultural responsiveness into the plan. This focus, as required by State legislation passed in late 2019 (SB 160), seeks to address the institutional marginalization experienced by communities traditionally underserved in emergency response and recovery. During the process, staff used "best practices" compiled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), followed the Six Step Planning Process for Emergency Operations Planning, and integrated guidance from key federal emergency management references including Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans, Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management, Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Chapter 7 of the Department of Justice ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Government. The new EOP was reviewed by the Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Coordinator's Forum and formally recommended for approval by the Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Council.

With the additional requirements in SB 160, this EOP also integrates cultural competence by addressing how culturally diverse communities within its jurisdiction are served by the following:

- 1) Emergency communications, including the integration of interpreters and translators;
- 2) Emergency evacuation and sheltering;
- 3) Emergency mitigation and prevention;
- 4) Emergency planning, including drawing on community-based values and customs, and incorporating qualified representatives from diverse population groups in the community, during the planning process; and
- 5) Emergency preparedness, including the use of culturally appropriate resources and outreach techniques to educate and prepare community members for emergencies or disasters.

The EOP outlines the concepts, structure, methods and tools to meet emergency management goals and these new equity objectives during both disaster and non-disaster times. The EOP is organized in eight parts: Purpose, Scope, Situation Overview, and Assumptions; Concept of Operations; Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities; Direction, Control, and Coordination; Information Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination; Mutual Aid; Plan Development and Maintenance; and Authority and References. The new EOP and associated annexes have been translated into Spanish and are available online.

The new EOP incorporates the tremendous changes seen since its last update in 2014 - these include lessons learned from real world responses to recent local disasters; improvements identified in planning workshops, drills, table top and functional exercises; new state and federal requirements; changes reflecting the

establishment of the Department of Emergency Management; and input, recommendations, and feedback from our residents and the SB 160 Community Advisory Group. The EOP incorporates clarifying graphics to assist stakeholder agencies and residents to visually navigate the document. The new EOP reflects the latest concepts, practices, and processes in emergency management and addresses new state regulatory requirements with regard to cultural responsiveness.

This EOP includes new demographic information that will inform County efforts about the populations that may experience institutional marginalization during disaster and to take corresponding mitigating actions, including commitment to new ways of communicating, serving, and working with community partners. Our County's equity efforts in disaster response can help to ensure that inequities do not deepen during and after a disaster, as demonstrated by recent analyses of national and local data (see, e.g. Portrait of Sonoma 2021 and Howell, Junia and Elliot, James R. "Damages Done: The Longitudinal Impacts of Natural Hazards on Wealth Inequality in the United States" in Social Problems, Volume 66, Issue 3, August 2019, Pages 448-467. doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spy016.).

SB 160 Background

SB 160 authorizes Counties to establish a community advisory group for the purpose of engaging "culturally diverse communities." The legislation defines "cultural competence" as the ability to understand, value, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures in order to ensure that the needs of all community members are addressed, with priority given to "culturally diverse communities." Cultural competence includes, but is not limited to, being respectful and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse population groups.

The legislation further defines "culturally diverse communities" as including, but not limited to, race and ethnicity, including indigenous peoples, communities of color, and immigrant and refugee communities; gender, including women; age, including the elderly and youth; sexual and gender minorities; people with disabilities; occupation and income level including low-income individuals and the unhoused; education level; people with no or limited English language proficiency; as well as geographic location.

In working to implement the SB160 and more fully reflect the Equity pillar of the County's Strategic Plan, staff employed a process to engage with the community through a series of bilingual meetings, and to value their efforts by providing stipends, as further described below. The Department of Emergency Management and the Office of Equity worked in partnership to ensure that community members who experience disconnection from our communications and services, and who are made more vulnerable after disasters, including immigrants and refugees, non-English speakers, low-wage and migrant workers, could provide recommendations regarding their needs and recommended strategies to assist us in addressing these experiences in the updated EOP.

Staff worked with local community members and organizations who have advocated resolving issues related to cultural responsiveness in our County's emergency response programs. These groups included Just Recovery Partnership (a collaborative funded by the Latino Community Foundation and made up of La Luz, Corazon Healdsburg, Raizes Collective, KBBF Radio, Movimiento Cultural de la Union Indígena (MCUI), and North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP)), North Bay Jobs with Justice, and the NBOP's Immigrant Defense Task Force (IDTF)). Working together, these groups provided specific recommendations, which allowed staff to better understand both the strengths and resources as well as the critical needs of these community members. In addition to

working with the aforementioned organizations as our community advisors, the Department of Emergency Management and the Office of Equity conducted virtual meetings in each of the supervisorial districts to further gather community input and perspectives, working with established local volunteer *promotores* (community health workers), who are organized to respond and support underserved communities during emergencies.

To honor the time and effort expended by these community members and organizations to provide critically important feedback to strengthen the plan in their capacity as Community Advisory Group members, the Office of Equity contracted with the North Bay Organizing Project and with MCUI to identify those Community Advisory Group members and to ensure their remuneration through a \$250 stipend for each members' time, as well as costs for translation of the MCUI contract. It is important to note that the number of people receiving stipends was limited by the resources available to the Office of Equity, and while a total of 26 individuals received a stipend, over 100 individuals participated in providing feedback and recommendations on the EOP.

Beginning in May 2021, the Department of Emergency Management and the Office of Equity met with the Community Advisory Group seven times and with other smaller focus groups including the IDTF approximately six times and discussed the many recommendations (including those from the IDTF) made since the 2017 Sonoma Nuns/Tubbs Fires and during this engagement effort. Those recommendations are included with this item as Attachment #4.

Of the 137 total recommendations received, 37 were included in the EOP, 34 were referred to other departments and agencies, 18 are planned or are in progress within DEM, 15 require policy changes outside of the County's authority, 5 were identified as potentially being addressed in proposed disaster recovery planning projects, 1 was declined, and 23 were repeated items or were not actionable. While some recommendations may require policy action by your Board, others can be implemented with additional direction and/or resource allocation.

The purpose of this engagement effort was to ensure that the recommendations raised by the Community Advisory Group, as well as from community members who participated in the Supervisorial District meetings were fully vetted and considered, and, to the extent possible, included in the EOP. The intent in considering, referring, and including specific recommendations in the EOP is to ensure that the County is able to address negative outcomes that people may have experienced as a result of institutional marginalization during past disaster responses.

While measuring impacts of this updated EOP on the outcomes of those disproportionately impacted community members is difficult, this EOP (and future versions of the Plan) benefits from the qualitative data shared by the Community Advisory Group. Future engagement efforts with regard to disaster response are recommended, as we recognize that there are inherent performance data measurement challenges during a disaster.

While this EOP is just one opportunity to address race and ethnic inequities, this engagement effort allowed us to identify the complementary actions to leverage our reach and our positive impact on our communities and to recognize the ongoing challenges we face to ensure we see and serve all community members. Many Community Advisory Group members remain unsatisfied with elements of this EOP. Yet, this Plan will be reviewed and revised at least once every five years or when key changes occur, such as additional lessons

learned in after-action reports and input from community members, community-based organizations, and Operational Area partners. This commitment to ongoing accountability will allow the County to document, evaluate, and assess our ability to achieve anticipated outcomes in addressing negative outcomes. As staff continue these efforts to move from addressing unmet needs to recognizing the untapped assets in our communities that experience disconnection and marginalization from our local government efforts, our community can heal, reconnect, and serve all residents equitably, respectfully, and excellently.

Strategic Plan:

This item directly support the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Racial Equity and Social Justice

Goal: Goal 3: Ensure racial equity throughout all County policy decisions and service delivery.

Objective: Objective 2: Collaborate with community members and stakeholder groups to develop racial equity strategies for County emergency response, economic recovery and resiliency planning efforts.

Prior Board Actions:

12/09/2014: Adoption of revised 2014 Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 21-22 Adopted	FY22-23 Projected	FY 23-24 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

None.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None.

Attachments:

Archivos Adjuntos:

1. Resolution
2. Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan - English
3. Plan de Operaciones de Emergencias para el Área Operativa del condado de Sonoma - Español
4. Community Advisory Group Feedback - English
5. Comentarios del Grupo Asesor Comunitario - Español
6. PowerPoint Presentation / Presentación de PowerPoint - English / Español

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None.