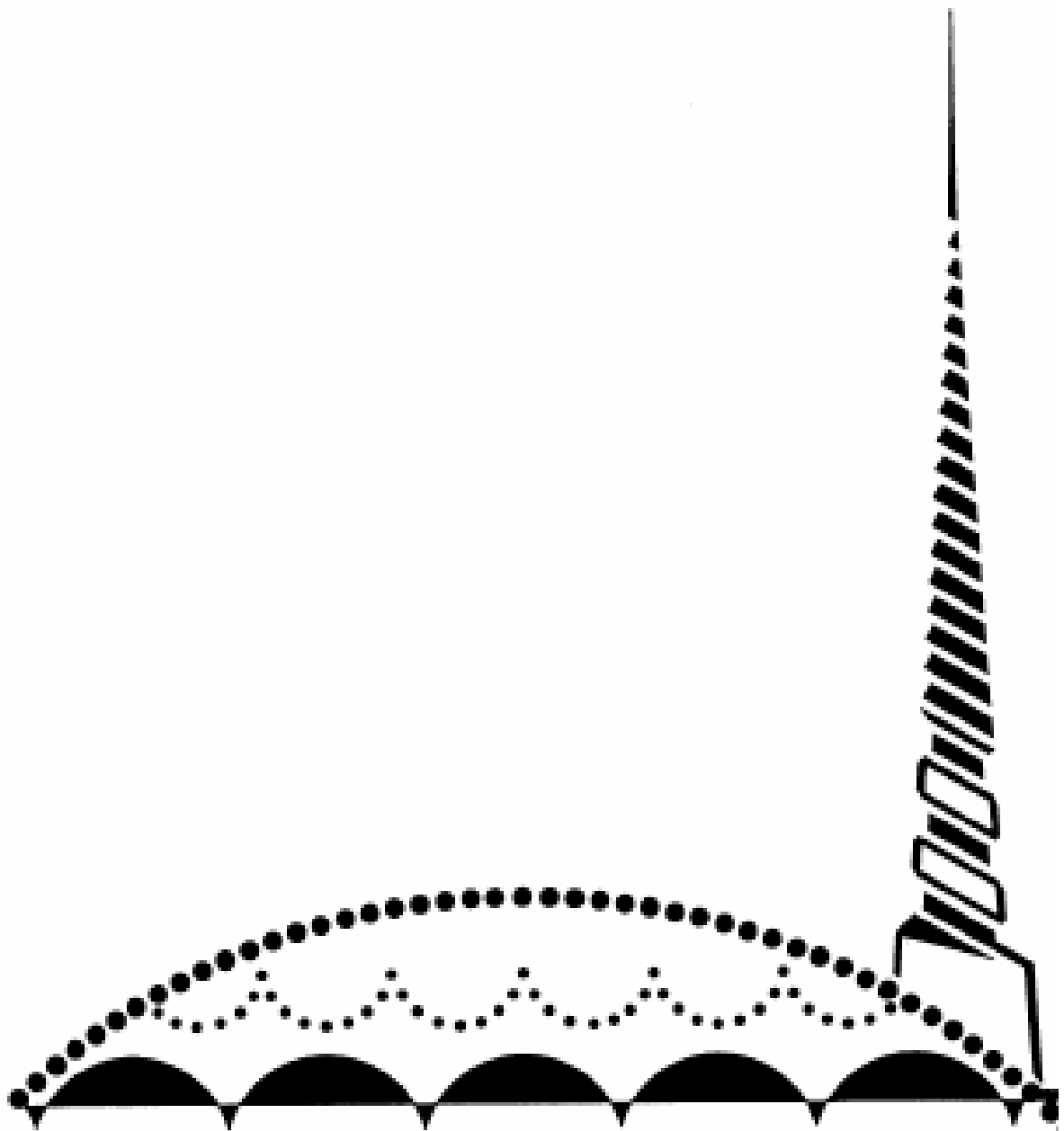
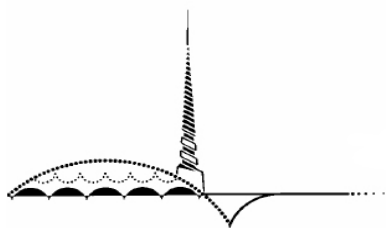


2005-2006 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

The Next Disaster: Are Marin Citizens Prepared?

June 20, 2006





THE NEXT DISASTER: ARE MARIN CITIZENS PREPARED?

SUMMARY

When disaster strikes Marin County again, as it surely will, local officials are concerned that the citizens will not be adequately prepared. Procrastination and apathy are the reasons most frequently given by citizens and officials for not preparing for disasters.

Citizens who are not prepared and wait for the government to respond following a disaster may endanger themselves and their families. The nightmare of events surrounding hurricane Katrina offered many lessons concerning the limitations of government to respond to a catastrophic event – one being that tragic consequences can befall citizens who are least prepared.

The 2005-2006 Grand Jury found that the County of Marin has made significant progress in improving the government's ability to respond to disasters since the Grand Jury reports addressed that topic in 2002. However, according to top city, town, and county officials, citizen preparedness – the ability of individuals and families to take care of themselves until government help arrives – has lagged.

This Grand Jury investigation focused on two issues: (1) the state of citizen preparedness for disaster and (2) the efforts by the County, cities and towns, community organizations and citizens to get the public to prepare for disasters.

Among the Grand Jury findings are that:

- There is widespread agreement among government officials and concerned citizens that lack of citizen preparedness is the biggest problem in disaster preparedness in Marin County.
- A few sustained efforts are being undertaken to define an acceptable level of citizen preparedness and track progress toward it.
- Numerous organizations are committed to solving the problem of the lack of citizen preparedness for disasters.
- Motivating our citizens to prepare for disasters seems to require continual reminders of the inevitability of disasters in Marin.
- Three County entities – the Director of Emergency Services (a member of the Board of Supervisors), the Office of Emergency Services and the Marin Operational Area Disaster & Citizen Corps Council – have been providing

considerable leadership and support and are in positions to provide additional leadership and support to county-wide efforts to get the citizens to prepare for disasters.

- Local disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, and neighborhood organizations represent sound community approaches to getting citizens to prepare; however, some cities and towns do not have active disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, or their equivalents.

The Grand Jury recommends:

- That the Director of Emergency Services lead an effort to determine an acceptable level of citizen disaster preparedness for Marin County and how to attain it.
- That the County Office of Emergency Services 1) expand its Disaster Service Worker database to include the results of citizen preparedness certification programs conducted by local disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, and neighborhood organizations and 2) periodically publish statistical information as an informal gauge of the level of preparedness to keep this issue in the public eye.
- That the Marin Operational Area Disaster & Citizen Corps Council provide a forum for community disaster preparation organizations (such as local disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, homeowners associations, neighborhood organizations, and individual citizens) to come together on a regular basis to share ideas and coordinate programs to get the citizens to prepare for disasters.
- That the Office of Emergency Services institute on-going campaigns to remind the citizens of the inevitability of disasters and the need to prepare for them (e.g., Marin Disaster Preparedness Week).
- That each city and town in Marin County establish and maintain a disaster council that is actively engaged in getting its citizens to prepare for disasters; that these disaster councils and any local neighborhood organizations develop and implement certification programs that will motivate and recognize citizen disaster preparedness; and that they report the results of their programs to OES for incorporation into its database.

BACKGROUND

Marin County is no stranger to natural disasters. We have endured earthquakes, wildfires, floods, and mudslides. Like the rest of the world, we watched in horror as hurricane Katrina unleashed its fury on the Gulf Coast in the fall of 2005. Although Katrina was devastating, the inability of government and relief agencies to provide help before, during, and after the hurricane signaled a significant change in how the public must prepare for disasters. This realization prompted the 2005-2006 Grand Jury to focus on the state of disaster preparedness of the citizens of Marin County.

Our investigation revealed that the County has made significant progress in improving its organization, resources, and facilities for responding to disasters since the 2001-2002 Grand Jury reports, “Bio-Terrorism Preparedness in Marin” and “Emergency Preparedness and Operations in Marin County.” The key area of concern expressed by the various officials responsible for disaster preparedness is the public’s lack of preparedness to meet the challenges of a disaster until the government and other agencies can respond. As a result, we undertook this investigation to evaluate public and private efforts to get the public to prepare for disasters, and to recommend improvements.

APPROACH

The investigation had two points of focus:

- To assess the public’s preparedness for disasters
- To evaluate the existing efforts to get the public to prepare for disasters

We interviewed County Office of Emergency Services (OES) officials, a top County official, County Supervisors, County school officials, city and town officials throughout Marin, representatives from the Marin Operational Area Disaster & Citizen Corps Council (DC3), volunteers with the Red Cross, and various neighborhood disaster response teams. We also met with principals of a public relations firm specializing in social issues. Members of the Grand Jury attended several DC3 meetings.

To assess the public’s preparedness for disasters, we asked officials and representatives from OES and each city, town, and volunteer organization we interviewed how they measured and assessed the public’s preparedness in their area.

To evaluate the existing efforts to get the public to prepare for disasters, we:

- Determined which organizations are responsible for getting the public to prepare
- Determined what efforts, programs, and resources have been initiated
- Consulted with communications/marketing/political action experts.

DISCUSSION

How Prepared Are the Citizens of Marin County?

There was unanimity among those we interviewed that the state of citizen preparedness in Marin is inadequate. However, we found only one source of data that attempted to measure disaster preparedness in Marin County.

This was the OES database of Disaster Service Workers (DSW), citizens who have completed some version of Community Emergency Response Team training (CERT), taught by some local fire departments.

OES includes the database as one of its “Direction, Control, and Coordination” functions on its Web page:

“Operational Area Disaster Service Worker (DSW) Registration Guidelines

Develop and implement a standardized DSW management program for the Operational Area. Develop registration procedures and provide materials and assistance to local jurisdictions. Maintain a centralized database of all registered DSWs and issue standardized ID cards.”¹

This database of CERT-trained citizens is also the only ongoing measure of current disaster preparedness we have found. The Grand Jury was told by an OES official that OES hopes that one and one-half percent of Marin County’s population will be trained by 2010. In early summer 2006, OES compiled the list of CERT-trained individuals provided in Appendix A. According to this data, only one-half of one percent was CERT trained at that time.

What Is Being Done to Get the Citizens of Marin to Prepare for Disasters?

We found efforts at many levels from the Board of Supervisors to local community volunteers to get the public to prepare for disasters. The following sections provide brief descriptions of their roles.

Role of the Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors designates one of its members as Director of Emergency Services. The Director of Emergency Services is empowered to:

“Direct and control the effort of the emergency organization of this county...” and to “Direct cooperation between and coordination of services and staff of the emergency organization of this county and resolve questions of authority and responsibility that may arise between them.”²

That Supervisor also serves as the chair of Marin Operational Area Disaster & Citizen Corps Council (DC3).

“Disaster preparedness is a front burner issue,” said a high level county official who lamented the pervasive public apathy and voiced frustration that nothing stays in the public’s consciousness because they don’t want to think about disasters. This official requested the Grand Jury’s help to motivate the public to get prepared. The official told the Grand Jury that the OES database is the only measure of citizen preparedness.

Role of Office of Emergency Services

The Marin County Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services (OES) has as its stated mission: “To protect life, property, and the environment by developing, coordinating, and

¹ <http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/ES/main/OESOverview/functions.cfm#4>

² Marin County Code, Section 2.99.035(A)(4) and (5)

managing programs that prepare for, respond to, and mitigate disasters and emergencies.”³

Key elements of OES programs that pertain to getting the public to prepare for disasters include:⁴

- CERT training: support the formation and training of CERT teams; develop and maintain a standardized set of CERT reference and training materials
- Crisis communications, public education, and information:
 - Threat-specific preparedness campaigns: Organize and coordinate focused public education campaigns to enhance personal and community preparedness. Campaigns include Earthquake Month and Winter Storm Preparedness Week.
 - Public education literature and a public education resource library
 - Community and organizational presentations
 - Media outreach

OES officials have informed us that:

- There have been no sustained efforts by OES to determine the level of public preparedness other than OES’s Disaster Service Worker database.
- OES lacks public relations expertise to communicate with and to motivate the public to prepare for disasters, has not engaged any public relations firms, nor does it have any staff position responsible for media/public relations. One senior staff member told the Grand Jury, “All staff are responsible for public outreach.” This year several OES staff members have made numerous presentations to local civic groups that include mention of citizen preparedness; however, they have not kept records of their efforts.

OES has no staff position dedicated to getting the public to prepare for disasters.

There is only one key function listed for OES in the OES Proposed Budget FY 2005-06 that pertains to getting the public to prepare for disasters: “Provide ongoing information and education programs for the public through participation in community events and in response to requests from neighborhoods and homeowner groups.”

Role of Marin Operational Area Disaster & Citizen Corps Council

DC3 was established by the Marin County Code. The duties, powers, and scope of the council, which is mandated to meet at least quarterly, include:

- a) “Review and evaluate disaster preparedness progress in the public and private sectors

³ County of Marin, Office of Emergency Services Overview, October 2005;

<http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/ES/main/OESOverView/functions.cfm>

⁴ Ibid

- b) Promote disaster preparedness through communication and education
- c) Harness the power of every resident through education and outreach, training, and volunteer service to make their families, homes and communities safer from natural and/or man-made disasters or emergencies
- d) Report annually to the Board of Supervisors.”⁵

The members of DC3 are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and serve staggered two-year terms. Appointments are made as deemed necessary to carry out the duties assigned to DC3, to include, but not limited to representation by:

- Director of Emergency Services, to permanently serve as chair
- Alternate Director of Emergency Services to serve as vice chair
- Consumer representatives appointed from each supervisory district
- Consumer representative, at large
- County Health and Human Services
- County Public Works
- Mayor’s and City Council Member’s Association
- City Manager’s Association
- Fire Chief’s Association
- Police Chief’s Association
- Marin Interagency Disaster Coalition
- Emergency Medical Care Committee or Emergency Medical Services Administrator
- Economic Commission
- Marin County Office of Education
- Marin County Office of the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter ⁶

The Public Disaster Education and Preparedness Committee of DC3 (PDEP) reported that “Most Marin residents are neither trained nor prepared to deal with disasters” and has proposed that “the County develop a Public Disaster Preparedness Plan to persuade Marin residents to take personal responsibility for their own protection against inevitable, unpredictable disasters.” The solution proposed by PDEP is to modify behavior through a “continuous and persuasive program of education, training and preparedness for county residents and businesses.” PDEP’s proposed plan recommended funding a position in OES for a coordinator. The Grand Jury has been unable to learn why this plan has never been adopted.

PDEP currently consists of 6 members, 4 of whom are DC3 members and 2 of whom are citizen volunteers. The current activities of the PDEP include:

- Preparing new CERT training manuals that will be used by all fire departments that provide CERT training
- Exploring the possibility of providing disaster preparedness training in area high schools
- Working with COMCAST on a 24/7 television station for disaster preparation

⁵ Marin County Code, Section 2.99.025

⁶ Marin County Code, Section 2.99.020

- Making presentations about preparedness to various organizations, i.e. Rotary, etc.
- Searching for a compelling message to motivate the public

Role of Marin County Office of Education

The Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) has an extensive disaster preparation program. The MCOE program is focused primarily on the preparedness of the school sites, staff, and students, but it has also provided materials to guide family disaster planning. MCOE has a Parents' Page on their Web site that includes extensive family preparedness information.

In October 2005, MCOE conducted a Parent Emergency Preparedness Workshop that addressed personal/home preparedness as well as parent responsibilities with respect to their children at school.

What are the Cities, Towns and Communities Doing about Getting the Public to Prepare for Disasters?

The only formal disaster training programs in Marin County are the CERT programs and its equivalents (NERT, DART, HEART)⁷. CERT programs are taught by local fire departments. One of the central principles of CERT and its equivalents is that citizens are likely to be on their own during the early stages of a catastrophic disaster, so some basic training in disaster preparation, survival, and rescue skills would improve their ability to survive until responders arrive. While the courses include citizen preparedness, there are no records to indicate whether the participants undertook any subsequent action to prepare their families and homes.

Local disaster councils provide another approach to citizen preparedness. The Grand Jury learned that the councils, when actively engaged, can be useful in encouraging citizen preparedness. In early 2006, we surveyed a number of Marin cities and towns about their disaster councils and disaster preparedness committees. The results are summarized in Table 1, below.

The towns of Belvedere and Tiburon, which have a joint disaster council, established a goal of making every household prepared for disaster. Their Disaster Task Force offers modified CERT training and has determined that an acceptable level of preparedness is to have at least one adult per household earn a certificate. Disaster councils have also been established in unincorporated areas of Marin, such as Bolinas, Inverness, Nicasio, Muir Beach, Stinson Beach, and Point Reyes Station where physical isolation serves as a motivator.

⁷ NERT: Neighborhood Emergency Response Team, DART: Disaster Area Response Team, HEART: Homeowner Emergency Action Response

Table 1 Status of Disaster Councils in Marin Incorporated Areas

City/Town	Status of Disaster Council
Belvedere	Joint disaster council and a joint Disaster Task Force with Tiburon.
Corte Madera	Disaster council appointed by the Town.
Fairfax	The Municipal Code does not provide for a Disaster Preparedness Council, but there is an informal Disaster Preparedness Committee.
Larkspur	May consider establishing a disaster council.
Mill Valley	Emergency Preparation Committee.
Novato	No disaster council. Hired an Emergency Services Coordinator.
Ross	No disaster council.
San Anselmo	Disaster Preparedness Committee, that has not met for several years.
San Rafael	No disaster council.
Sausalito	Disaster council that meets monthly.
Tiburon	Joint disaster council and a joint Disaster Task Force with Belvedere.

Local governments are not the only entities getting citizens to prepare. There are grassroots efforts by homeowners’ associations and other neighborhood organizations to get local citizens, individually and collectively, ready for disasters. We spoke with representatives of several neighborhood groups and were impressed by how well-organized they are despite meager funding. Some of the common techniques these groups employ are:

- Divide neighborhoods into smaller units and assign each a neighborhood liaison who is the initial contact
- Obtain written emergency assistance information from each residence
- Collect and store communal emergency supplies
- Provide classes to update skills
- Disseminate current information by newsletters
- Lobby local officials (i.e., Supervisor, Fire Chief, etc.) for grants, supplies and special presentations
- Stage drills to test preparedness

There is unanimity among the various governmental agencies and other organizations that the citizens of Marin are not prepared for a disaster. There is even agreement that the lack of preparedness is due to procrastination and apathy. Unfortunately, the many well-conceived, but fragmented and uncoordinated attempts to get citizens to prepare have not remedied this serious problem.

FINDINGS

- F1. There is widespread agreement among government officials and concerned citizens that there is pervasive public apathy with regard to citizen disaster preparedness in Marin County.
- F2. A few sustained efforts are being undertaken to define an acceptable level of citizen preparedness and track progress toward it. Without such information, efforts to combat lack of preparedness, either public or private, cannot be appropriately targeted (i.e., which communities are most vulnerable and/or behind others) or evaluated (i.e., what works and what doesn't).
- OES's DSW database currently tracks people who have gone through formal CERT training; however, it appears to provide a basis for tracking more general citizen preparedness, given proper input.
 - Certification programs, like the CERT program or Belvedere-Tiburon's modified CERT program, can provide the data needed to track the progress of citizen preparedness.
- F3. Numerous community organizations are committed to solving the lack of citizen preparedness for disasters and are to be commended. Many are developing their own approaches, Web sites and materials, generally with meager funding and reliance on local talent.
- F4. Motivating our citizens to prepare for disasters requires sustained and persuasive reminders of the inevitability of disasters in Marin.
- F5. Three County entities have been providing considerable leadership and support to county-wide efforts to get the citizens to prepare for disasters and are in positions to provide additional leadership and support.
- The Director of Emergency Services is empowered by the County Code to "Direct and control the effort of the emergency organization of this county..."; and to "Direct cooperation between and coordination of services and staff of the emergency organization of this county, and resolve questions of authority and responsibility that may arise between them."
 - The mission of the Office of Emergency Services is "To protect life, property, and the environment by developing, coordinating, and managing programs that prepare for, respond to, and mitigate disasters and emergencies." One of the key elements of its programs is to organize and coordinate focused public education campaigns to enhance personal and community preparedness. Campaigns include Earthquake Month and Winter Storm Preparedness Week.
 - The Marin Operational Area Disaster and Citizen Corps Council's duties, powers, and scope include:
 - “a) Review and evaluate disaster preparedness progress in the public and private sectors;
 - b) Promote disaster preparedness through communication and education;

c) Harness the power of every resident through education and outreach, training, and volunteer service to make their families, homes, and communities safer from natural and/or man-made disasters or emergencies; and

d) Report annually to the Board of Supervisors.”

- F6. Local disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, and local neighborhood organizations represent sound community approaches to getting citizens to prepare; however, some cities and towns do not have active disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, or their equivalent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2005-2006 Grand Jury recommends:

- R1. That the Director of Emergency Services use his/her authority under the Marin County Code to lead an effort to determine an acceptable level of citizen disaster preparedness for Marin County and how to attain it.
- R2. That the County Office of Emergency Services expand its DSW database to include the results of citizen preparedness certification programs conducted by local disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, and neighborhood organizations and periodically publish statistical information as an informal gauge of the level of preparedness to keep this issue in the public eye.
- R3. That the Marin Operational Area Disaster & Citizen Corps Council dedicate a forum (perhaps PDEP) for community disaster preparation organizations (such as local disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees, homeowners associations, neighborhood organizations, and individual citizens) to come together on a regular basis to share ideas and coordinate programs to get citizens to prepare for disasters.
- R4. That the Office of Emergency Services institute on-going campaigns to remind the citizens of the inevitability of disasters and the need to prepare for them (e.g., Marin Disaster Preparedness Week).
- R5. That each city and town in Marin County establish and maintain a disaster council that actively engages in getting its citizens to prepare for disasters; that these disaster councils, disaster preparedness committees or their equivalent and any local neighborhood organizations develop and implement certification programs that will motivate and recognize citizen disaster preparedness; and that they report the results of their programs to OES for incorporation into its database.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies:

- Marin County Board of Supervisors: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, R2, R3, R4, R5
- The city and town councils of the incorporated areas of Marin County: F1, F4, F5, F6, R2, R3, R4, R5

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted in accordance with Penal Code Section 933(c) and subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

The California Penal Code Section 933(c) states that "...the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body." Further, the Ralph M. Brown Act requires that any action of a public entity governing board occur only at a noticed and agendized public meeting.

From the following individual:

- The Marin County Sheriff: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5

The Grand Jury invites the following individuals to respond:

- The Marin County Director of Emergency Services: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5
- The Marin County Emergency Services Manager: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5
- The Marin Operational Area Disaster and Citizen Corps Council: F1, F3, F4, F5, F6, R1, R3, R4, R5

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- County of Marin Proposed Budget FY 2005-06
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Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Civil Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Civil Grand Jury investigation.

APPENDIX A

**CERT Registrations
As of June 2006**

City of Residence	Number Registered
Belvedere	8
Bolinas	27
Corte Madera	238
Dogtown	1
Fairfax	15
Forest Knolls	11
Greenbrae	19
Inverness	28
Kentfield	16
Lagunitas	14
Larkspur	14
Marin City	17
Marshall	7
Mill Valley	273
Nicasio	11
Novato (not by HEART)	105
Pt. Reyes Station	18
Ross	6
San Anselmo	32
San Geronimo	6
San Rafael	363
Sausalito	75
Stinson Beach	21
Tiburon	50
Woodacre	18
Total	1,269