

**DRY CREEK-LOKOYA
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

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FILED

JUN 24 2008

Clerk of the Napa Superior Court
By: 
Deputy

June 20, 2008

TO: Napa County Grand Jury

RE: 2007-2008 Final Report on the Napa County Fire Department

Received
Napa Superior Court

JUN 24 2008

Court Executive Office

Following are my responses to various items in the Grand Jury Report. First, I want to thank the Grand Jury members who spent quality time with me at the Dry Creek-Lokoya Firehouse. I found our conversation very informative and rewarding. Thank you for your difficult work.

I would like to open with a question. The Grand Jury members told me that all of my responses were to be confidential. I assumed that my responses to the report (this paper) would also be confidential. However, it was made very clear to me by NCFD administration that my response was to be included in the board packet presented from NCFD. Thus, I am including my responses not in a confidential form but in a more public fashion. I must also say that I have no issue with whatever I put in this response as viewed by anyone.

1) Numerous times in the report there is mention of the lack of proper training for the volunteer fire departments (i.e., pgs. 2, 25, 26 plus many more). I agree with this observation. Just as the report discusses in Future County Organization of NCFD the possibility of a separate County employee who would be the County Fire Chief, I truly believe there is a need to have a County Training Officer whose sole job would be to provide proper and professional training only to the volunteer fire departments. This County Training Officer would need to meet all of the requirements of NFPA 1041, which the current CalFire/NCFD Training Officers do not meet as per the report. The current system has three flaws. 1) The paid CalFire/NCFD Training Officers are usually in that position for only a few years. It is a "rotating door" for promotion. This does not allow for continuity within the training bureau. The next T.O. has the tendency to begin his/her own training program regardless of what happened before. 2) During fire season, the paid CalFire/NCFD Training Officers are too often out-of-county on Strike Teams or involved with other fire activity and are not available for training. This, obviously, greatly affects the quality of training for the VFD. Also, our current Respiratory Protection Program (RPP), also referred to as Fit Testing, is managed and maintained by the paid CalFire/NCFD staff at Napa Station. Just today I know of a VFD that tried to get the Fit Test machine but the paid CalFire/NCFD person in charge is out of the area

Dedication, Commitment, Loyalty, Intelligence, Honesty, Compassion

covering another station. A County Training Officer could manage the RPP program much better by being available when needed. 3) Regular training is provided by the paid CalFire/NCFD stations. This is a very good way to interface the VFD more with the paid staff. Unfortunately, it has happened too many times that during a training provided by the paid station, they will receive a call that they need to respond to. This, too, greatly affects the quality of training. A County employee (i.e., a volunteer firefighter) hired to provide training ONLY for the VFD's who would have a flex schedule to provide trainings on weekends and in the evening to meet the needs of the VFD would be the best solution.

2) I disagree with a statement on page 7. On page 7 of the report, this is a discussion regarding the process for the removal of a Volunteer Fire Chief. Part of the conversation included the statement, "...none of the requisite volunteer officials would agree to participate in an investigation, thereby making it impossible to take any action under the MOU." Please be clear on this point, I was NEVER asked to participate in any action regarding the removal of a Volunteer Fire Chief, even though it would have been appropriate as per the MOU to ask me to participate. My understanding is that the decision to punish the Volunteer Fire Chief in question was solely made by the Napa County Fire Chief. It is also my understanding it was the Napa County Board of Supervisors decision to not back the Napa County Fire Chief's action. The MOU had nothing to do with the Napa County Board of Supervisors decision to over rule the Chief's action. The MOU does provide a process. It has not been followed.

3) I need to clarify information on page 8 of the report. Part of the current MOU provides for committees (as listed) to be jointly responsible for developing and implementing policies. These committees have not been active for at least two years. It was agreed that the committees were not working effectively and were thus disbanded. The next step was to rewrite the current MOU with a better procedure for developing policies. I am a member of the MOU committee for rewriting. I have been waiting for two years for this committee to begin its work. I am not really sure what document my Volunteer Fire Department is currently working under or to whom I report: the Napa County Fire Chief or the Napa County Board of Supervisors.

4) I agree with the statement on pages 8 and 9 but do not believe it is true. The statement, "The Board of Supervisors is responsible for oversight of the Napa County Fire Department" is what I believe should be proper. However, I have not seen evidence that the Napa County Board of Directors is providing proper oversight, especially when it comes to the relationship between CalFire/NCFD and NCFD/VFD. The Volunteer Fire Chiefs have been personally told that it is the job of the Napa County Fire Chief to keep us out of the supervisor's offices, that we should not communicate with our elected officials. I truly understand the "chain of command" and how issues should be passed up the line, but when issues are not addressed, we need to also be able to go to our County Board of Supervisors. I do agree with the statement on page 30 regarding the Napa

County Board of Supervisors, “the Board of Supervisors has not insured that the provisions of the County/NCFD were fully implemented.”

5) I support suggestion #2 under Future County Organization of NCFD on page 12. While Chief Loveless came into his job as the Napa County Fire Chief with enthusiasm and dedication, I believe that he has too much on his plate being the CalFire Unit Chief for the six-county Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit. A “County employee whose sole responsibility as County Fire Chief would be the NCFD” I believe is the best solution. This would not mean that CalFire, the overall administrator of NCFD, would be out of the picture. The County employed Napa County Fire Chief would need to interact on a daily basis with headquarters. This Napa County Fire Chief would also work directly with the County Training Officer suggested in #1 above. It is obvious that this County Chief would need some support staff such as the current County hired office manger. Also, the statement that who ever is the Napa County Fire Chief needs to have the proper authority stands for anyone in that position.

6) On pages 17 and 31 the report speaks to the needs of the Dry Creek-Lokoya main firehouse. As a clarification, I have requested an exhaust system the last two years when the Fixed Asset requests were due. Both times I was turned down with no explanation. The current Fixed Asset process has no method of detailing why decisions were made. I have had to go outside of NCFD to try and find extra money to install an exhaust system for the engines so that my firefighters can have healthy air to breath while on duty. As for the septic system, my department does not raise enough money to fix the current septic system problem at the main firehouse. We cannot shower nor use the restroom. We must use an outhouse during all seasons of the year. Without assistance from the County, your Volunteer Firefighters will not have access to the basic comforts that the paid CalFire/NCFD firehouses have.

7) Also on page 17 the report states that there is a Type III engine in the Mt. Veeder fire shed. This is incorrect as NCFD moved the Type III engine from that location to the valley floor (Napa Station) two years ago. The DCL Board of Directors used some of the fund raising money to purchase a squad (Squad 16) to replace the engine. While the squad does not carry any water (something we do need) it does cover all initial calls for medicals and other incidents. NCFD has promised that this privately owned vehicle would be replaced during the 2008-2009 fiscal year with a Type IV engine (which does carry water).

8) I disagree with the statement on page 29 that generally states that the MOU has taken away the authority of the Napa County Fire Chief. I have been on every rewrite of the original MOU and every attempt was made by the committee to define the Napa County Fire Chief as the ONLY Fire Chief in charge of NCFD. This was to give the Napa County Fire Chief authority over the Volunteer Fire Chiefs. In my opinion, it has been the Napa County Board of Supervisors that have taken away the authority of the

Napa County Fire Chief by not backing his decisions as mentioned in #2 above. If a Volunteer Fire Chief has a “friend” on the Napa County Board of Supervisors, then he might not receive the “punishment” deserved or the original problem would continue to fester.

9) I disagree with Appendix 2: NCFD Policy and Procedures Manual Contents. There are at least seven more completed policies and procedures not listed in the appendix.

10) I agree with Appendix 5: NCFD Replacement Criteria. E316 (and shortly E216) is currently at the 18-year replacement criterion (built in 1990) and does not meet current NFPA 1901 safety standards for apparatus. E216 was built in 1991 and will be out of compliance next year.

Again, let me repeat that I truly appreciate the work completed by the Grand Jury, a group of citizens who view Napa County through “citizen eyes.” I do not have high hopes that this report will complete any more than the last Grand Jury Report, which I feel was not truly considered by the previous CalFire/NCFD administration. At a recent Volunteer Chief’s Advisory Board meeting, the new Grand Jury Report was referred to as “bull-shit” by one CalFire/NCFD administrator. Unfortunately, one of the Volunteer Chiefs agreed with this statement. However, I for one, am willing to continue to fight for Napa County Fire Department and for the Volunteer Fire Departments that are an integral part of NCFD working with the paid CalFire/NCFD firefighters of Napa County Fire Department.

Sincerely submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Green", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gary Green, Chief 16
Napa County Fire Department
Dry Creek-Lokoya
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