

REDCOM
Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority

Memorandum

DATE: October 10, 2005

TO: All Member Agencies and Contract Entities

FROM: Bart A. Lewis, DOAG Chair

SUBJECT: **REDCOM Outage, September 17, 2005**

As everyone is aware, REDCOM suffered a severe outage and went out of service on Saturday, September 17, 2005 for a period of approximately three and one-half hours. This memo is to provide you with some preliminary information about what happened and what post incident actions are occurring.

The cause of the problem was a malfunctioning humidifier in the ceiling above the radio and computer equipment room in the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office building. This room houses all of the radio control equipment for REDCOM and the Sheriff, including the controls for the mountain top repeaters on the REDCOM channel and the control channels. The room also houses the CAD computer equipment, the 911 phone equipment and some of the seven-digit telephone equipment. As a result of the humidifier problem, much of the equipment was being damaged by water and an emergency shut-down of all equipment in the room had to be made. This effectively put the Sheriff's dispatch center and REDCOM out of business.

Although a complete back-up plan was not yet developed for all REDCOM systems, an informal plan has been in place for some time and was followed. 911 calls were routed to the Santa Rosa Police Department, CDF's St. Helena Emergency Command Center (ECC) took over the fire dispatch function, and Sonoma Life Support staff dispatched ambulances via the ir Nextel system.

Some unanticipated technical problems were encountered that prevented the ECC from utilizing the REDCOM channel for paging. This was dealt with by notifying agencies by phone to monitor the radio channels, using Control 5 (White 1) to dispatch fire units in the center core of the county, and using the CDF West Frequency to dispatch local fire units in the outlying areas. While this process was "rough around the edges" it did work. No 911 calls were missed that we know of and all incidents received a response.

During this emergency, many things went well. County information systems and facilities personnel responded very quickly and began repair and restoration work. REDCOM dispatch personnel performed admirably by reacting quickly and appropriately to the situation. REDCOM personnel were sent both to Santa Rosa Police Dispatch and the ECC to assist. The Santa Rosa Police Dispatch personnel and the CDF's staff at the ECC did an outstanding job in taking on the additional duties. CDF sent their Mobile Communications Unit to REDCOM to be used if necessary, distributed extra engines throughout the County and sent command staff to REDCOM. The SLS staff, REDCOM Duty Officers, the Area Mutual Aid Coordinator and several DOAG members also responded to REDCOM to assist and a Santa Rosa Battalion Chief responded to SRPD to help coordinate efforts at that location. Last of all, the member agencies were all cooperative and helpful during this stressful time.

The staff at REDCOM and the DOAG have also recognized that several areas need to be bolstered and improved upon, not the least of which is that a detailed formal backup plan and procedures needs to be developed. This process has already begun. The REDCOM staff have put together a detailed After Action Report to document everything that occurred. Staff from REDCOM, the Sheriff, SRPD, CDF and County Information Systems are meeting to review processes and procedures. The DOAG's Backup Committee has been tasked with critiquing the incident, evaluating all information and developing an action plan.

At this point it is important that all agencies dispatched by REDCOM provide the Backup Committee with any pertinent information that they have regarding this incident. Second, all agencies are encouraged to be part of the process to refine and improve the backup procedures. It is essential that backup plans and procedures be developed in a unified process by the REDCOM joint powers authority in order assure that backup procedures work in a coordinated and effective manner. Agencies wishing to provide input and to participate in the process should contact Chief Doug Williams of the Rincon Valley Fire District at 539-1801 or through e-mail at DWilliams@RVFire.org.

Again, although the emergency procedures put in place on September 17th were not as perfect as we would have liked, things did work effectively and there was no lapse in service. The DOAG is approaching this as a learning opportunity to enable our joint powers authority to improve our ability to provide quality service to ourselves.