

# County Disaster Effort Scathed

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County government's chain of command was "dispersed, illogical and sometimes disruptive" during the January storms that caused millions of dollars in damage and killed 22 county residents, according to a county grand jury report released this morning.

While complimenting the "magnificent work . . . by many people within and without county government," the jury generally scathed at the way County Administrator George Newell and his analysts handled county's response.

From reports to the press during the emergency, Newell took over as top emergency officer, along with Sheriff Al Noren on the police management side. Newell brought in his analysts to handle various types of requests coming into the emergency room at County Center.

Operations didn't go smoothly and the county ended in a spitting match with state Office of Emergency Services, during and after the emergency.

The jury states that from its investigation, "In many cases rescue work and other disaster-related needs were accomplished outside of and in spite of the county emergency organization and personnel.

"The basic problem in the county emergency organization was disorganization and lack of knowledge of what to do throughout county government.

"The two causes of these problems were the lack of a clear and competent chain of command and the lack of

## Capitola Fire Unit A 'Threat'

The Capitola Fire Department is a threat to the lives and property of residents in the mid-county city, according to an interim county grand jury report released today.

It poses that danger "because of disorganization, lack of leadership and low morale (and) the grand jury cannot recommend strongly enough that action must be taken to avoid imminent disaster," the report states.

Serious problems in the department have been known to the fire commission for over a year, since the Capitola City Council asked that study be done of its efficiency.

The study, completed by Phenix Technology Inc. in April of last year, noted the department needed leadership and also lacked goals, gave the department low marks in "management," and criticized downtown station for having a dangerous exit.

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usable, written, and generally-known disaster procedures," the reports states.

It becomes specific in its recommendations, stating, "the Board of Supervisors should establish a clear and logical chain of command for emergencies which does not involve lower echelon CAO (county administrative officer) management personnel being left in charge."

The jury doesn't make it clear who they were speaking of, but Newell's

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second in command, Michael Van De Veer, tangled early with state officers during the emergency and later with federal officials to get more county aid from the state and federal emergency programs.

The grand jury didn't see it as the way to get aid, its report states, "because of the confusion and ignorance, the county was unable to get prompt help and equipment from sources outside the county.

"The best use was not made of personnel, county resources, regional resources and state disaster assistance."

The jury claims that because of the confusion, "the chain of command was ignored in many instances."

It further recommends the county board set up a countywide task force involving the four cities, require that its internal departments have written emergency plans and that the county cooperate with state Fish and Game to clear the waterways of obstructions.

Newell said this morning he will comment later on the report officially to the Board of Supervisors.