



**2011–2012
Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report
County Engineering Department
Special Districts Division**

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Introduction:

There are more than 100 maintenance districts and service areas (districts) in Madera County. These districts were formed to provide one or more specialized services to the residents of specific areas. Services provided may include water, sewer, road maintenance, lighting, and/or drainage. The Board of Supervisors (BoS) acts as the Board of Directors for the districts.

The Special Districts Division Manager provides general oversight for the sewer and water districts and reports directly to the County Engineer. The Division's 20 employees operate and maintain approximately 31 water systems and 15 sewer systems throughout the county.

The BoS reviews and approves the assessments and service charges for each district as required by Madera County Code Section 13.89.010(b). The following factors are used in determining these rates:

- reserve for planned and unplanned repair expenses;
- capital improvement project(s);
- number of connections;
- age and condition of the system;
- the demands placed upon the system; and
- revenue derived solely from customers in the district.

The Grand Jury interviewed staff of the County Engineering Department in its review of the Special Districts Division operations.

Findings:

1. The Grand Jury found that the Division is not utilizing the County's formal safety and first aid program known as the Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP).
2. The Grand Jury found that contractors are used for large maintenance and new installation projects.
3. The Grand Jury found that the Engineering Department is responsible for facilitating the preparation and monitoring of the contracts.
4. The Grand Jury found that the Division Manager has limited input into the budget process.

5. The Grand Jury found that the County is a member of the Underground Service Alert (USA) Program for marking and locating underground facilities.
 - a. The Division does not have complete emergency response plans to deal with a catastrophe or line break.
 - b. The Engineering Department does not have or maintain a mapping system, but relies on “as built” or engineering drawings.
 - c. The Division does not generate or maintain required marking and locating documentation.
6. The Grand Jury found that the Division currently has two unfilled funded positions, an operations manager and an electrician.

Conclusions:

1. The Grand Jury concluded that failure to utilize the County's IIPP increases County liability exposure.
2. The Grand Jury concluded that the Division would benefit by greater participation of the Division Manager in the budget process.
3. The Grand Jury concluded that the Division is not following the requirements of the USA Program and is in violation of state and federal regulations.

Recommendations:

1. The Grand Jury recommends that the County implement and monitor its existing IIPP.
2. The Grand Jury recommends that the County comply with the requirements of the USA Program by:
 - a. developing an accurate and up-to-date mapping system;
 - b. establishing emergency response plans; and
 - c. generating and maintaining marking and locating documentation.

Respondents: written response required pursuant to PC 933(c)

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Informational: response optional

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