California State Auditor

BUREAU OF STATE AUDITS

Governor's Office of Emergency Services:

Its Oversight of the State's Emergency Plans and Procedures Needs Improvement While Its Future Ability to Respond to Emergencies May Be Hampered by Aging Equipment and Funding Concerns

July 2003
2002-113

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CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR

ELAINE M. HOWLE
STATE AUDITOR

STEVEN M. HENDRICKSON
CHIEF DEPUTY STATE AUDITOR

July 30, 2003 2002-113

The Governor of California
President pro Tempore of the Senate
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor and Legislative Leaders:

As requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, the Bureau of State Audits presents its audit report concerning the extent to which the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and county emergency operation centers (EOCs) are able to coordinate and respond to multijurisdictional emergencies under the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).

This report concludes that the State's Emergency Plan and related annexes provide adequate guidance to agencies responding to multijurisdictional emergencies, but that OES lacks a formal process to regularly evaluate and update these plans. Additionally, OES is not consistently evaluating the use of SEMS by preparing statutorily required after-action reports following all declared disasters or through regular meetings of its SEMS advisory board and technical group. While the Federal Emergency Management Agency and most state agencies we interviewed believe OES does well in coordinating responses to emergencies, OES often does not record the data needed to evaluate its performance in its resources tracking system. Further, clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the State's Office of Homeland Security and OES would be beneficial to ensure that clear lines of authority exist. Also, OES has had difficulty in acquiring and maintaining emergency response equipment due to what it asserts is inadequate funding, resulting in 26 percent of its fire engines exceeding their useful lives and other legislatively-mandated equipment—heavy urban search and rescue vehicles and thermal imaging equipment—not being purchased.

Finally, our review of six EOCs found that they had adequate plans and training to prepare for emergencies. However, OES's recent survey of all local EOCs—conducted to apply for a federal grant—reveals that some counties are in need of potentially costly upgrades to improve their ability to respond to emergencies.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Howle

ELAINE M. HOWLE
State Auditor

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SUMMARY

Audit Highlights . . .

Our review of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services' (OES) and counties' ability to coordinate and respond to multijurisdictional and multiagency emergencies revealed the following:

- ☑ *OES lacks a formal process to regularly review and update the State Emergency Plan and its related annexes.*
- ☑ *OES does not consistently perform activities needed to evaluate and improve its coordination of emergency responses under the Standardized Emergency Management System.*
- ☑ *Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the State's Office of Homeland Security and OES would be beneficial.*
- ☑ *With aging equipment and other equipment not in place, OES's ability to task its own resources during an emergency may be limited.*

The six county emergency operation centers (EOCs) we reviewed generally have adequate emergency response plans and training, however, OES's recent survey of county EOCs revealed that many are in need of better equipment and potentially costly upgrades.

RESULTS IN BRIEF

From fires, floods, earthquakes, civil disturbances and storms, California has experienced a series of disasters since 1997. These disasters highlight the importance of an effective emergency response system in California. Established in 1970 under the California Emergency Services Act (act), the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) serves as the lead emergency management agency in California. OES's mission is to ensure that the State is ready and able to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the effects of emergencies that threaten lives, property, and the environment. In fulfilling its responsibilities under the act, OES is responsible for assuring the State's readiness to respond and recover from natural, man-made, and war-caused emergencies. It is also responsible for assisting local governments in their emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Among these activities are OES's efforts to update the State Emergency Plan (emergency plan) and related annexes, assess the adequacy of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), and identify weaknesses in its own performance during past emergencies while applying any lessons learned.

While OES has developed an emergency plan and related annexes that appear to provide adequate guidance to agencies responding to an emergency, our audit reveals a lack of formal processes to ensure that the emergency plan and related annexes are regularly reviewed and then updated when necessary. Additionally, OES is not consistently evaluating the use of SEMS by preparing statutorily required after-action reports following declared disasters or through regular meetings of its SEMS advisory board and technical group. While other agencies we interviewed believe that OES does well in coordinating emergencies, OES does not always approve requests for resources within its own time guidelines. Similarly, OES does not enter key data into the Response Information Management System (RIMS)—a computer system it uses to track resource requests—that would allow it to determine whether resources that OES has tasked arrive at emergencies in a timely manner. Without a formal and regular review of the emergency plan and related annexes, SEMS procedures, and its own performance, OES is missing opportunities to develop operational capabilities and improve emergency

responses to future disasters. Finally, we noted that OES has not always identified the critical training that its staff working in state and regional emergency operations centers need to effectively complete their duties. According to OES, it lacks the funding to develop and implement training requirements for its staff.

Further, clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the State's new Office of Homeland Security (OHS) and OES would be beneficial. The authority provided to OES under the act and the authority provided to OHS by the governor's February 2003 executive order appear to have the potential to overlap. Moreover, the directors of the two offices appear to have differing views on their roles and responsibilities. A lack of clarity in their respective roles and responsibilities could adversely affect the State's ability to respond to emergencies.

OES also has had difficulty acquiring and maintaining emergency response and communication equipment due to what it asserts is inadequate funding. For example, 26 percent of OES's fleet of 115 fire engines have been in service longer than the 17-year useful life that OES has adopted. OES considers these fire engines—which are kept and staffed by local governments—as the State's contribution to the statewide fire and rescue mutual aid system. OES has recently acquired sufficient budgetary funding and allocated a portion of its budget to begin replacing its aging fire engines. In addition, despite a legislative mandate to have heavy urban search and rescue units, OES has none of these units, which are used to help extricate people from collapsed structures. OES requested funding for 18 units in fiscal year 2001–02, but this funding was not provided. However, OES has not performed a current analysis to determine how many heavy urban search and rescue units are needed in the State in order to appropriately respond to an emergency. With aging equipment, and other equipment not in place, OES's ability to task its own resources during an emergency may be limited. Our audit also finds that OES has not tried to establish the thermal imaging equipment-purchasing program required by law. This purchasing program is intended to use the State's buying power to obtain this equipment at a lower price, and for OES to pay half of the cost for the equipment on behalf of interested local governments. The law also allows local governments to purchase this equipment directly from the vendor that OES contracts with—at a lower price than they could obtain on their own—if they choose. While OES believes that it will be extremely difficult to implement this program absent a funding allocation, the law requires OES to start the program with its own funds

or other sources. Further, OES could have established this purchasing program to give local governments access to lower cost thermal imaging equipment.

Also presenting a problem for OES is its backup communications system, a satellite network called OASIS—Operational Area Satellite Information System—which is degrading and threatens to limit OES's ability to coordinate with local governments should telephone communications become disabled during a major emergency.

Finally, our review of six county emergency operation centers (EOCs) reveals that most have adequate emergency response plans incorporating the use of SEMS. We also note that the six EOCs have taken adequate steps to prepare their staff for emergencies by training them in SEMS procedures and the use of RIMS. Most of these EOCs also perform tabletop and functional or full-scale exercises to practice the skills their emergency management personnel acquired from the training classes while identifying any difficulties they could encounter during an actual disaster. However, even though the EOCs we visited appear to have adequate plans and training, a survey that OES performed of all counties' primary and alternate EOCs reveals that many need better equipment and potentially costly upgrades. As a result, many EOCs may be unable to manage emergencies without any disruption to their operations. OES is using the results of its survey to obtain federal funding to address some of the weaknesses uncovered by its assessment of all county EOCs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the emergency plan and related annexes are regularly evaluated and updated when necessary, OES should develop and follow formal procedures for conducting regular assessments of these documents and then update them when necessary.

To ensure that SEMS remains a workable method to respond to emergencies, OES should more consistently evaluate its use and identify areas of weaknesses and needed improvements. Specifically, OES should do the following:

- Institute internal controls to ensure it receives after-action reports from all responding entities to an emergency, such as requiring after-action reports prior to reimbursing local agencies for

response-related personnel costs. Further, OES should ensure that the reports by local governments evaluate the use of SEMS for any needed improvements and enhancements.

- Prepare after-action reports after each declared disaster that review emergency response and recovery activities.

- Develop a system that tracks weaknesses noted in the after-action reports, which unit is responsible for correcting those weaknesses, and what corrective actions were taken for each weakness.

- Reconvene the SEMS advisory board and technical group to foster more communication among emergency response agencies on the use of SEMS and to provide OES advice and recommendations on SEMS.

To evaluate its own performance during emergencies and identify areas for improvement, OES should ensure that it can track how long it takes to approve resource requests and pinpoint when those resources arrived at the emergency. To help facilitate this process, OES should use RIMS to accurately capture this information for subsequent analysis.

To help ensure that OES's Fire and Rescue Branch efficiently approves and tracks resource requests, OES should use an automated system to accurately track these requests and record arrival times. That automated system should be RIMS unless OES can sufficiently justify the additional benefits and expense of using another system. Further, because it indicated in the feasibility study report for RIMS that the Fire and Rescue Branch would use RIMS, OES should ensure that the scope of future information technology systems is clearly disclosed to parties that decide whether to fund these systems.

To ensure that the State is adequately prepared to address emergencies, OHS should work with the governor on how to best clarify the roles and responsibilities of OHS and OES.

To ensure that it and local governments have the equipment needed to be adequately prepared for emergencies, OES should take the following actions:

- For its fire engine program, OES should continue with its schedule for replacing older and poor performing fire engines in the fleet.

- To meet its statutory requirement to acquire and maintain heavy urban search and rescue equipment, OES should perform a needs analysis to determine the number of these units that are required to respond to a major earthquake. As part of this analysis and to assess where more units should be placed, OES should create and maintain records of the existing urban search and rescue capacity in the State. If this needs analysis concludes that additional units are required, OES should submit a budget change proposal to acquire this equipment and develop a maintenance and replacement schedule for it.

- To allow local governments access to thermal imaging equipment at a lower cost, OES should initiate the statutorily required steps to establish a purchasing program for this equipment. These steps should include determining the interest of local governments in purchasing this equipment. OES should identify grants, private corporations, or other sources, including its own funding, to pay its half-share of the equipment cost. However, if OES determines that it cannot identify funding for its share of the cost, OES should explore the use of the State's buying power to enter into a contract that allows local governments to purchase this equipment at a lower cost.

- To ensure that it has a backup system to communicate with local governments and agencies during a major disaster, OES should study options to extend the life of or replace OASIS. However, if it concludes that OASIS should be replaced, OES should justify this replacement by demonstrating that maintenance costs are exorbitant and that OASIS is down for excessive periods for repair. Further, OES should work with the Department of General Services to resolve the delay in obtaining an approved contract for a vendor to maintain OASIS and, in the future, prepare and submit contracts to allow sufficient time for Department of General Services' review and approval.

AGENCY COMMENTS

OHS and OES agreed with each of our recommendations and provided clarifying comments for several issues raised in the report. ■

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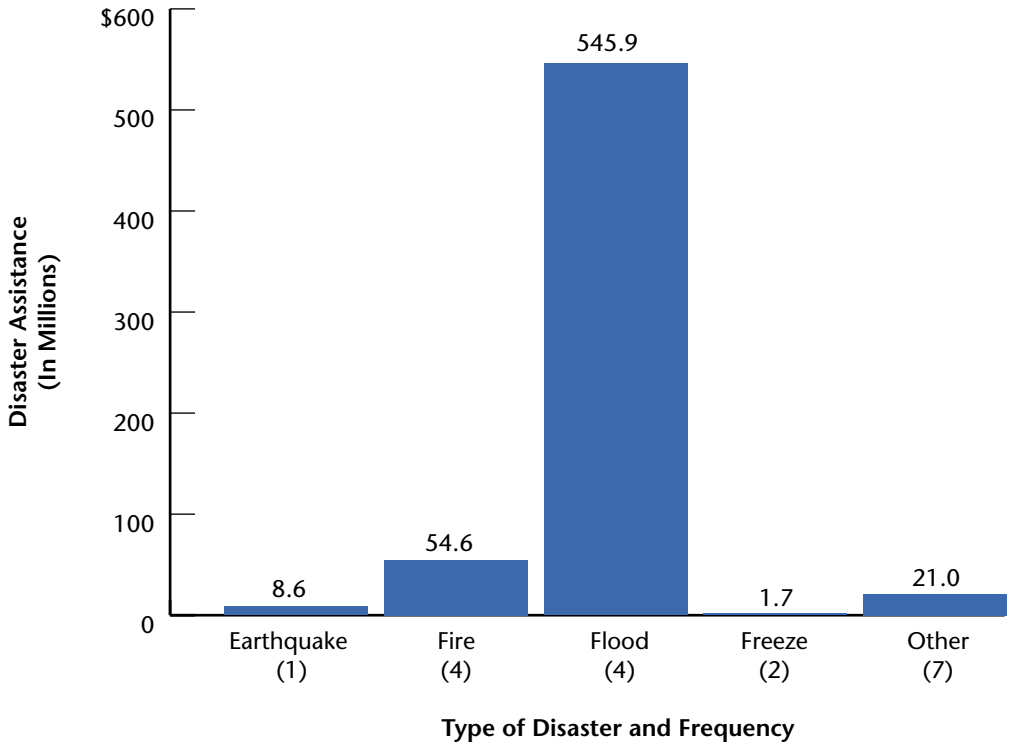
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Since 1997, California has experienced a series of disasters including fires, floods, earthquakes, civil disturbances, and storms. These disasters highlight the importance of an effective emergency response system in California. Figure 1 shows major emergencies in California, and their associated costs, between January 1997 and February 2002.

FIGURE 1

Frequency and Dollars Associated With Declared Disasters in California (Between January 1997 and February 2002)



Source: Data from the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

OES'S ROLE IN CALIFORNIA'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

Established in 1970 under the California Emergency Services Act (act), the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) serves as the lead emergency management agency in California. With a budget of approximately $52 million for preparing and responding to disasters during fiscal year 2001–02, OES's mission is to ensure that the State is ready and able to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the effects of emergencies that threaten lives, property, and the environment. Under the act, OES is responsible for assuring the State's readiness to respond to and recover from natural, man-made, and war-caused emergencies. It is also responsible for assisting local governments in their emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Accordingly, OES developed the State Emergency Plan (emergency plan), which establishes a system for coordinating all phases of emergency management in California. Additionally, OES developed annexes to the emergency plan that specifically address events such as earthquakes, terrorism, nuclear power plant emergencies, and fire and rescue emergencies.

Conditions or Degrees of Emergency Defined by the Act

State of war emergency—means the condition that exists immediately, even without being formally proclaimed by the governor, whenever the State or nation is attacked by an enemy of the United States, or upon receipt by the State of a warning from the federal government indicating that such an enemy attack is probable or imminent.

State of emergency—means the duly appointed authority has proclaimed the existence of conditions of disaster or extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the State that, by reason of their magnitude, are or are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of any single county, city and county, or city and require the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to combat. Includes conditions such as fire, flood, storm, riot, sudden and severe energy shortage, and earthquake.

Local emergency—means the duly appointed authority has proclaimed the existence of conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the territorial limits of a county, city and county, or city that are likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment, and facilities of that political subdivision and require the combined forces of other political subdivisions to combat. Includes conditions similar to those listed in a state of emergency above.

OES coordinates the State response to major emergencies in support of local governments, which have the primary responsibility for emergency management. Local jurisdictions first use their own resources and, as they are exhausted, obtain more from neighboring cities and other counties throughout the State through the statewide mutual aid system. In California, the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) provides the mechanism by which a local government requests assistance.

OES is the lead agency for mobilizing the State's resources and obtaining federal resources; it also oversees the State's mutual aid system. During an emergency, OES coordinates the State's response efforts and activates its state operations center (state center) in Sacramento, along with its three regional emergency operations centers (regional centers) in impacted areas, to process local requests for assistance. It is also responsible for collecting, verifying, and evaluating information about the emergency, providing affected jurisdictions with additional resources when necessary.

If required, OES may task state agencies to perform work outside their day-to-day and statutory responsibilities in order to provide emergency services. OES also maintains caches of specialized equipment, principally for use by local agencies. Included among this equipment are 115 fire engines stationed throughout the State with local fire departments that can be dispatched when needed in support of local governments. OES also helps the State recover from emergencies by managing statewide disaster recovery and mitigation activities. Acting as the grantee for federally funded disaster assistance programs, OES assists local governments, businesses, and individuals impacted by emergencies.

The act provides the governor broad powers to carry out emergency response responsibilities. The governor has subsequently delegated much of the authority to OES. The act allows the governor to expend any appropriation for support of carrying out the responsibilities of the act. Furthermore, the act allows that during a state of emergency the governor may direct all agencies of the State to utilize and employ state personnel, equipment, and facilities for all activities designed to prevent or alleviate actual and threatened damage due to the emergency.

Components of the Emergency Plan

- A description of the California Emergency Organization.
- A description of mutual aid use during nondeclared and declared emergencies to ensure effective coordination of needed resources.
- General policies to guide emergency management activities.
- Guidance on interagency coordination to deliver assistance.
- Specific responsibilities of state agencies and various levels of the California Emergency Organization.
- Potential assignments for state agencies.
- Interagency and intergovernmental shared responsibilities.
- Supporting plans and procedures.

In February 2003, the governor established by executive order the State's Office of Homeland Security (OHS). The mission of OHS includes developing and coordinating a comprehensive state strategy of security activities throughout the State. The executive order directs OES to report to the Governor's Office through the OHS director.

THE EMERGENCY PLAN ESTABLISHES A SYSTEM FOR COORDINATING ALL PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN CALIFORNIA

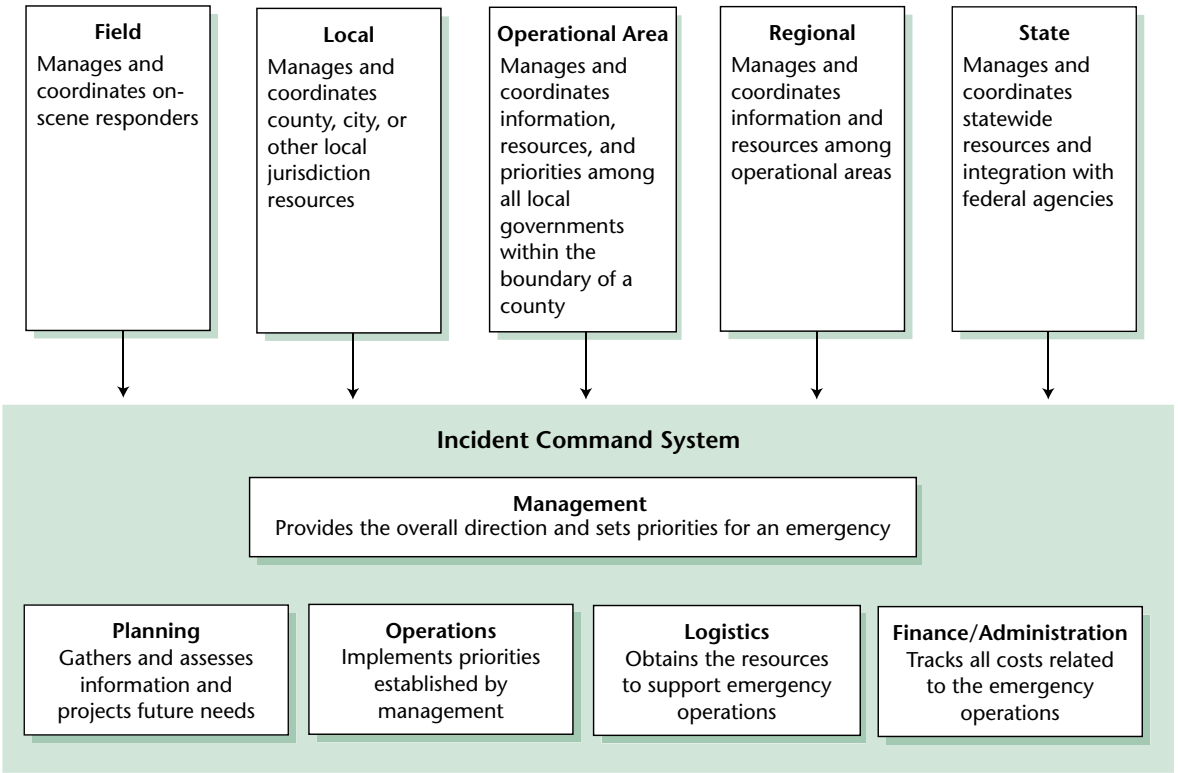
The act calls for the development of an emergency plan that describes the principles and methods to be applied in carrying out emergency operations. Accordingly, OES has prepared the emergency plan, which establishes a system for coordinating all phases of emergency management in California. Statute requires OES to establish a standardized emergency management system for use by all

emergency response agencies. Accordingly, OES developed SEMS for managing multiagency and multijurisdictional emergencies in California.

Figure 2 shows that SEMS consists of five organizational levels, which are activated as needed in responding to an emergency. State response agencies are required by statute to use SEMS, while local government agencies are required to use SEMS in order to be eligible for reimbursement of response-related costs under disaster assistance programs.

FIGURE 2

Standardized Emergency Management System



Source: State Emergency Plan.

SEMS incorporates the use of the incident command system, which provides a means to coordinate the efforts of individual agencies as they work toward stabilizing the incident and protecting life, property, and the environment. In order to

coordinate the effective use of all available resources, the incident command system establishes five major functions: management, planning, operations, logistics, and finance/administration.

Resource requests for response and recovery operations originate at the lowest level of government and are progressively forwarded to the next level until filled. For example, if an operational area is unable to provide the necessary requested assistance, it may contact the OES regional center to forward the request. California has established essential communication support procedures between the operational areas, the OES regional centers, the OES state center, and other state agencies to provide the information links that are used when responding to an emergency.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMERGENCY OPERATION CENTERS UNDER SEMS

The basic role of a local government is to manage and coordinate the overall emergency response and recovery activities within its jurisdiction. A local government under SEMS is a city, county, city and county, school district, or special district. During an emergency, the local government would establish coordination and communications with the commander at the field level and respond to resource requests from the field level. In order to facilitate the coordination and communication with the field level, the local government may activate a command post known as an emergency operation center (EOC). Each county has a primary EOC, and in most cases an alternate EOC that is available if the primary facility is out of commission. To improve its ability to respond to major disasters, OES developed a computer software package in 1995 called the Response Information Management System (RIMS).

RIMS AND ITS ROLE IN RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

In order to increase its level of service by improving its ability to collect; process; and disseminate status, response, planning, and resource information during a disaster, OES proposed an information management system—RIMS—to be implemented at the State, regional, and operational area levels. OES designed RIMS to address five primary business problems associated with responding to emergencies. According to OES's feasibility study

report for RIMS, OES needed to increase the efficiency and productivity of its time-consuming emergency response effort, which was based on manual, paper-based procedures and phone and facsimile communications.

The Five Business Problems at OES That RIMS Was to Address

1. Backlog of resource requests resulting from the inability to process requests in a timely manner.
2. Misdirection of response resources resulting from the inability to direct or allocate resources according to need.
3. Out-of-date, incomplete, and labor-intensive status reports.
4. Inefficient and time-consuming duplication of effort by disaster response and recovery personnel.
5. Inefficient procedures for generating, accessing, and interpreting historical records used for after-action reports, accounting, legal, planning, mitigation, and training purposes.

Source: *Feasibility Study Report for the Response Information Management System (RIMS), 1995.*

At the time of the feasibility study in 1995, OES believed that the application of information technology would dramatically increase the efficiency of response personnel. The RIMS feasibility study states, "[RIMS] would help eliminate the usual backlog of requests for resources and help ensure the right resources arrive in the right place, when needed." However, OES believed that RIMS would have additional benefits as well. OES stated as much in the feasibility study when it said, "RIMS will play a major role in ensuring compliance with the Standardized Emergency Management Act of 1993. This system [RIMS], by accelerating and optimizing the application of response resources, could help save hundreds or thousands of lives, dramatically reduce suffering, and save millions of dollars in recovery costs in the next major disaster."

As of June 2003, RIMS was available to all cities, special districts, and state agencies within California that have access to the Internet. While RIMS is used to process resource requests, it is not used to request local fire resources during an emergency. Instead, discipline-specific resources are requested and filled through the State's mutual aid system.

CALIFORNIA'S MUTUAL AID SYSTEM IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF SEMS

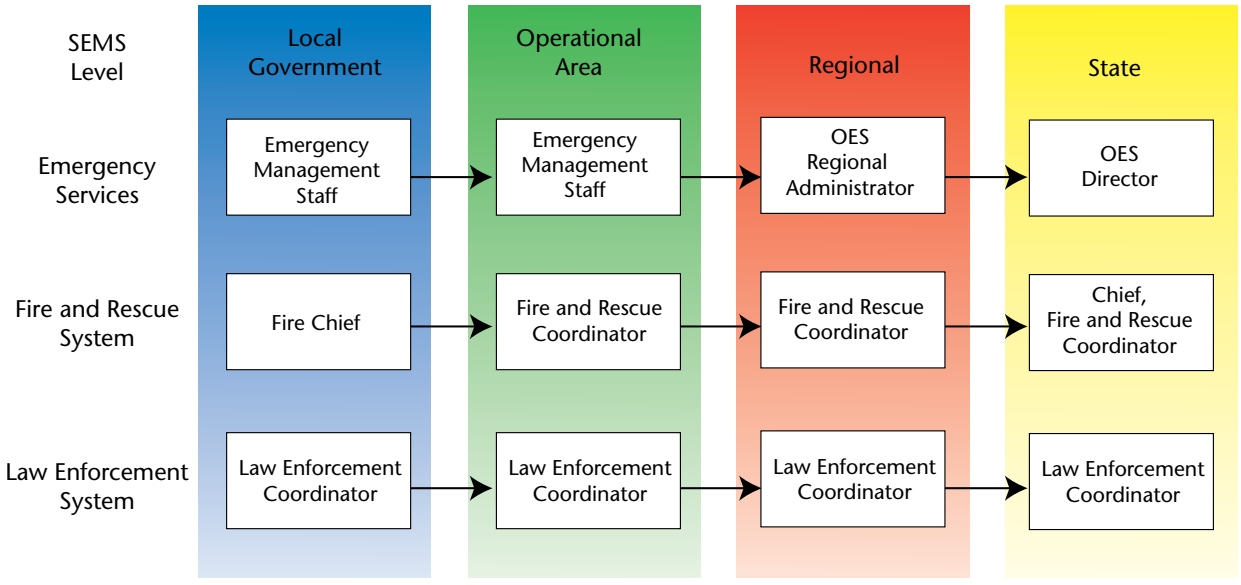
Emergencies may require responses that exceed the resources of the affected agencies and jurisdictions. When this occurs, other agencies, local governments, and the State may be asked to provide resources—usually trained personnel and equipment—to assist in responding. This process is known as mutual aid. Mutual aid is provided on a voluntary basis and may include services and facilities such as fire, police, medical and health, communications, transportation, and utilities. Mutual aid is provided between and among local jurisdictions and the State under the terms of the California Disaster and Civil Defense

Master Mutual Aid Agreement (MMAA). Developed in 1950, the MMAA has been adopted by most of California's incorporated cities, all 58 counties, and the State.

California's mutual aid program has developed statewide mutual aid systems. As shown in Figure 3, these systems are discipline-specific and have been developed for fire and rescue, law enforcement, medical services, and public works. These systems, operating within the framework of the MMAA, allow for the progressive mobilization of resources to and from emergency response agencies, local governments, operational areas, regions, and the State to provide requesting agencies with adequate resources. According to OES's SEMS guidelines, adopting SEMS does not alter existing mutual aid systems. These systems work through the local government, operational area, and regional and state levels consistent with SEMS. The State's mutual aid systems are used to process resource requests during an emergency while SEMS provides an organizational structure to ensure adequate communication and coordination from the field to state levels. Mutual aid may also come from the federal government, other states, and volunteer and private agencies.

FIGURE 3

Mutual Aid Resource Request Flow



Source: State Emergency Plan.

Note: The arrows represent the progressive flow of resource requests.

To facilitate mutual aid, discipline-specific mutual aid plans work through designated mutual aid coordinators at the operational area and regional and state levels. The coordinator's basic role is to receive mutual aid requests, coordinate the provision of resources from within the coordinator's geographic area of responsibility, and pass on unfilled requests to the next level. In processing requests for resources, mutual aid coordinators under the fire and rescue mutual aid system do not use RIMS, but instead rely on manual, paper-based procedures and phone and facsimile communications.

NO DEFINITIVE STANDARDS EXIST TO EVALUATE OES'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATING THE STATE'S RESPONSE TO AN EMERGENCY

Evaluations of OES's policies and procedures for responding to emergencies are hampered by the lack of formal standards established by the emergency management community. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does not develop standards for state and local governments. However, states assess their own capabilities under FEMA's Capability Assessment for Readiness (CAR) process. According to FEMA documents, in the future, the results of the CAR process may yield criteria via recommended practices for emergency management. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has published some standards on emergency management. Published in January 2000, the *NFPA 1600* offers various recommended practices; however, these practices are neither binding on the State nor sufficiently detailed for assessing OES's policies and procedures in responding to emergencies. Without formal standards, we have relied on anecdotal information and interviews of other state and federal agencies, as well as local governments, to assess OES's policies and procedures for coordinating multijurisdictional and multiagency responses to an emergency.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee (audit committee) requested that the Bureau of State Audits (bureau) review and assess OES's policies and procedures for assessing and coordinating multijurisdictional and multiagency responses to emergencies under SEMS and the emergency plan. The audit committee also asked the bureau to determine if OES is

maintaining the emergency plan as required by law. Further, the audit committee requested that the bureau review a sample of EOCs across the State. Specifically, the audit committee requested that the bureau determine (1) the placement of necessary emergency equipment; (2) the physical preparedness, accessibility, and sustainability of the sampled EOCs; and (3) the ability for agencies identified by SEMS to access and coordinate information through the EOCs.

We reviewed the laws, regulations, and selected OES policies and procedures regarding the assessment and coordination of emergency responses. Based on our review of the laws, we identified OES's responsibilities for maintaining the emergency plan and for acquiring certain emergency response equipment. We also identified OES's areas of responsibility in evaluating the State's use of SEMS and in taking corrective action as necessary.

To determine whether OES has maintained and appropriately updated the emergency plan and related annexes, we identified the required annexes for various types of emergencies and determined if they were present in the emergency plan. We also assessed whether the emergency plan and its related annexes provided clear instructions or protocols on how OES and its local affiliates should coordinate and respond to emergencies. To gain an understanding of mutual aid agreements and their importance on the State's protocols for coordinating and responding to emergencies, we reviewed the master mutual aid plan and various mutual aid guides.

To review and assess OES's policies and procedures for assessing and coordinating responses to an emergency under SEMS and the emergency plan, we interviewed OES contacts for six state departments and FEMA. Additionally, we selected a sample of 10 governor-proclaimed emergencies since 1997 and reviewed OES's coordination activities in responding to these emergencies. Specifically, for each sampled emergency, we determined how promptly OES responded to assistance requests by reviewing data posted in RIMS. Our review of the 10 governor-proclaimed emergencies also included the statutorily required after-action reports to determine if OES was evaluating the use of SEMS and had identified any weaknesses for corrective action.

To evaluate OES's future ability to adequately coordinate and respond to emergencies, we identified key individuals within OES that would be involved in coordinating and responding to an emergency at the state level. We determined that these

individuals worked in its state and regional centers. We ascertained whether OES had identified the training these employees need to effectively complete their responsibilities. If training needs were identified, we then determined whether key individuals had received the training.

In order to further evaluate OES's ability to coordinate and respond during an emergency, OES assisted us in identifying critical equipment for these functions. After we identified the critical equipment, we determined the desired maintenance and replacement schedules. Using the maintenance and replacement schedules, we assessed whether OES adheres to these schedules and identified any critical equipment that is in danger of becoming unusable or old and obsolete.

To determine whether counties' EOCs are able to adequately coordinate and respond to multijurisdictional and multiagency emergencies, we selected a sample of six EOCs, one from each mutual aid region. Through site visits, we assessed the flexibility, sustainability, security, survivability, and interoperability of each selected EOC. We learned that OES was surveying county EOCs to assess these characteristics. Thus, to the extent possible, we used the survey results to evaluate the county EOCs. In order to gain some assurance that the survey responses for all EOCs were accurate, we compared the responses of the six county EOCs we visited to our own observations, interviews, and obtained documentation. In addition, we assessed whether the six sampled EOCs had adequate policies and procedures to coordinate and respond to emergencies in conformance with OES and SEMS guidelines. Further, we assessed the training program of EOC employees and determined whether they hold periodic multijurisdictional and multiagency exercises. Based on OES's survey results, we present the individual scores of all 58 county EOCs in the Appendix. However, we do not provide county names for the EOCs listed in Chapter 3 and the Appendix because OES indicated that it would protect the release of this information under the Public Records Act. ■

CHAPTER 1

OES Can Improve the State's Preparedness for Emergencies by Consistently Assessing the Adequacy of Its Plans and Performance

CHAPTER SUMMARY

One of the four main missions of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) is to engage in emergency-preparedness activities to improve responses to disasters. Among these activities are OES's efforts to update the State Emergency Plan (emergency plan) and its related annexes, assess the adequacy of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), and identify weaknesses in its own performance during past emergencies while applying any lessons learned. While OES has developed an emergency response plan and related annexes that provide adequate guidance for agencies to respond during emergencies, OES has not established a formal process to regularly review and update these plans. Further, we note that OES is not consistently evaluating the use of SEMS by preparing statutorily required after-action reports following all declared disasters, or through regular meetings of its SEMS advisory board and technical group. Although the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and most state agencies we interviewed believe OES does well in coordinating responses to emergencies, OES does not always approve requests for resources within its own time guidelines. Similarly, OES does not always enter key data into the Response Information Management System (RIMS) that would allow it to determine whether resources that OES tasked arrive at emergencies in a timely manner. Without a consistent and formalized review of the emergency plan and its annexes, SEMS procedures, and its own performance, OES is missing opportunities to develop operational capabilities and improve emergency responses to disasters.

Further, OES has not always identified the critical training that its staff working in the state operations center (state center) and regional emergency operations centers (regional centers) need to effectively complete their duties. Without an assessment of its staff's training needs, OES is not in a position to ensure that key staff are properly trained. According to OES, it lacks the funding to develop and implement training requirements for its staff.

Finally, clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the State's Office of Homeland Security (OHS) and OES would be beneficial. The authority provided to OES under the California Emergency Services Act (act) and the authority provided to OHS by the governor's February 2003 executive order appear to have the potential to overlap. Further, the directors of the two offices appear to have differing views on their roles and responsibilities. A lack of clarity in their respective roles and responsibilities could adversely affect the State's ability to respond to emergencies.

THE STATE'S EMERGENCY PLAN AND RELATED ANNEXES APPEAR TO ADEQUATELY GUIDE AGENCIES TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES

The act establishes the requirement for an emergency plan and declares that it shall be in effect in each political subdivision of the State. The act also requires the governing body of each political subdivision to carry out the provisions of the emergency plan. OES is responsible for maintaining the emergency plan and for assisting local governments and other state agencies in developing their own emergency plans. Accordingly, OES has developed the emergency plan, as well as several annexes to it addressing topics such as terrorism, earthquakes, and nuclear power plant emergencies. These plans provide the framework for the State's response to all types of emergencies. Taken together, these plans appear to provide adequate guidance for responding to an emergency.

Priorities When Conducting Emergency Operations

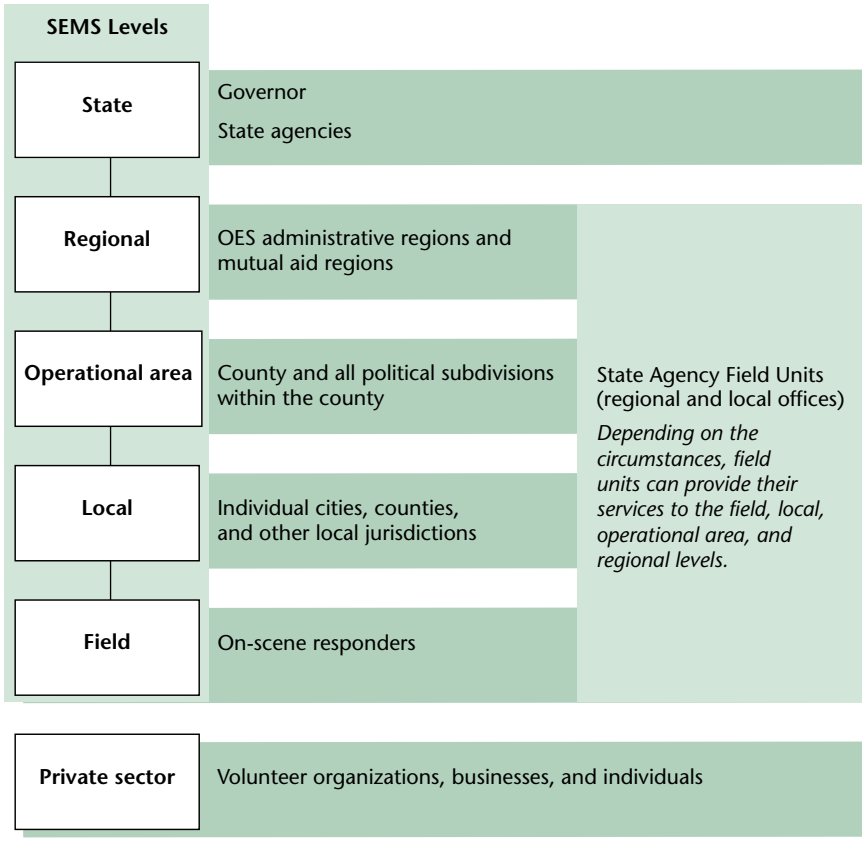
- Protecting life (highest priority), property, and the environment.
- Meeting the immediate emergency needs of people, including rescue, medical care, food, shelter, and clothing.
- Temporarily restoring facilities that are essential to the health, safety, and welfare of people.
- Meeting the rehabilitation needs of people, including provisions of temporary housing, food stamps, and employment.
- Mitigating hazards that pose a threat to life, property, and the environment.

Statute requires the State to use SEMS for managing its response to multijurisdiction and multiagency emergencies. Local governments also must use SEMS to be eligible for funding of their personnel-related costs under state disaster assistance programs. SEMS consists of five organizational levels, which are activated as necessary to respond to emergencies: field response (the emergency site), local government (city, county, or other local jurisdiction), operational area (the county and all the political subdivisions within the county, which coordinate between local and region), regional (which coordinate between the State and operational area), and the State (OES coordinates the State response at its state and regional centers).

Figure 4 displays the composition of the California Emergency Organization. Resource requests for response and recovery to an emergency originate at the lowest level and are progressively forwarded to the next level until filled. Additionally, when support requirements cannot be met with state resources, the OES may request assistance from federal agencies such as FEMA.

FIGURE 4

California Emergency Organization



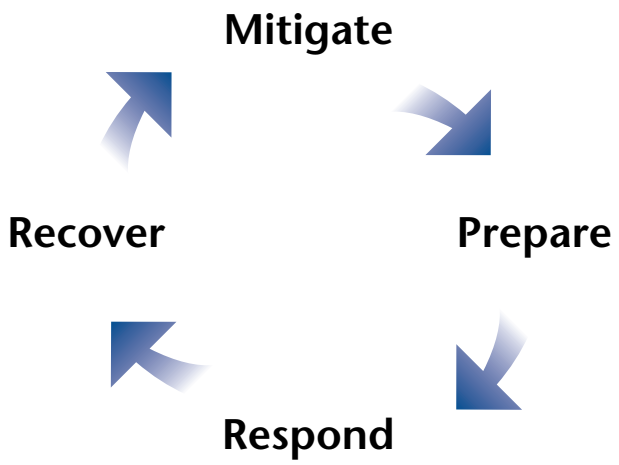
Source: State Emergency Plan.

The emergency plan also describes communications support procedures among the SEMS levels within the California Emergency Organization to provide the information links during emergencies. This communications infrastructure includes, among others, the use of RIMS—a computerized information and resource tracking system—and the California portion of the National Warning System.

The emergency plan identifies and describes the four phases of emergency management. As shown in Figure 5, the four phases make up what the emergency plan refers to as the disaster cycle. The preparedness phase involves activities undertaken in advance of an emergency. These activities develop operational capabilities and improve effective response to disasters. They include developing and revising disaster plans, training response personnel, and improving public information and communications systems. In the response phase, actions are taken to save lives, protect property, and minimize the effects of the disaster. During this phase, warning systems may be activated, resources may be mobilized, including mutual aid, and emergency operations centers may be activated. The recovery phase consists of both short-term activity, intended to return vital life-support systems to operation, and long-term activity, designed to return infrastructure systems to predisaster conditions. Finally, the mitigation phase includes a review of ways to eliminate or reduce the impact of future disasters including the lessons learned from disasters the State encounters.

FIGURE 5

The Disaster Cycle



Source: State Emergency Plan.

The second part of the emergency plan identifies the activities included in the response and recovery phases, and it identifies the state agency roles in fulfilling these activities. The activities are broken out into functional areas, including management, planning, operations, logistics, and finance/administration. These are the functions that are integrated in SEMS. The emergency plan

identifies the response and recovery activities that are required within each functional area and identifies the state agencies that have either a lead or support role in fulfilling the activity. Table 1 provides the list of the functional areas and the related key activities.

TABLE 1

Key State Response and Recovery Activities

Response Activities	Recovery Activities
Management	**Management**
• Liaison	• Legislative liaison
• Public information	• Public information
• Safety	• Safety
Planning/Intelligence	**Planning**
• Situation status and analysis	• Situation status and analysis
• Mobilization/demobilization	• Mobilization/demobilization
• Advance planning	• Advance planning
• Technical specialists	• Action planning
Operations	**Operations**
• Fire, rescue, and law enforcement	• Individual assistance
• Medical and health services	• Public assistance
• Care and shelter	• Hazard mitigation
• Utilities and hazardous materials	
Logistics	**Logistics**
• Information systems and communications	• Information systems and communications
• Transportation	• Transportation
• Facilities coordination	• Facilities coordination
• Resource tracking	• Resource tracking
Finance/Administration	**Finance/Administration**
• Compensation and claims	• Compensation and claims
• Cost accounting	• Cost accounting
• Damage survey report record keeping	• Damage survey report record keeping

Source: State Emergency Plan.

OES HAS NOT ESTABLISHED A FORMAL PROCESS TO REGULARLY EVALUATE AND UPDATE THE STATE EMERGENCY PLAN AND RELATED ANNEXES

OES lacks a formal process to regularly evaluate and update the emergency plan and its related annexes as necessary. Without such a process, OES cannot ensure that these documents remain current and adequately protect the State. OES indicates that previous emergency plan updates were made in 1959, 1984, 1989, 1998, and 2003. When we asked whether OES regularly updates the emergency plan and related annexes, the director of OES's Planning and Technological Assistance Branch explained that they do not, but that they are updated when changes in state or federal laws impact emergency management, or when changes in regulations, policies, or significant procedures occur. However, this director indicated that the passage of time, absent other changes, is not necessarily a criterion for updating the emergency plan and its related annexes.

OES's Last Update to the State Emergency Plan and Selected Annexes

- ***State Emergency Plan***—updated 2003
- ***Earthquake Advisory Plan***—updated 1990
- ***Emergency Resources Management Plan***—updated 1968
- ***Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid Plan***—updated 1988
- ***Hazardous Material Incident Contingency Plan***—updated 1991
- ***Nuclear Power Plant Emergency Response Plan***—updated 2000
- ***Parkfield California Earthquake Prediction Response Plan***—updated 1997
- ***Post Disaster Safety Assessment Plan***—updated 2003
- ***Radiological Intelligence Plan***—updated 1979

OES developed a terrorism response plan as an additional annex to the emergency plan. Refer to audit report 2002-117 (July 2003) for more information on this plan.

OES did review the emergency plan in March 2003 as part of a federal effort to ensure that the emergency plan is current. During this review, OES determined that no significant updates were necessary to the emergency plan, although some minor clarifying points and changes were made. Overall, OES concluded that the emergency plan was sound and complete at present. To receive federal funding, OES needed to ensure that the existing emergency plan was adequate and capable of guiding appropriate emergency response and recovery operations in the State. As part of this effort, OES used a checklist that was provided by the federal government to assist OES in its review of the emergency plan. This checklist includes key elements expected in a plan, including a review of the planning and functional responsibilities, and capabilities including communications, warnings, public education,

protective actions, public health planning, health and medical coordination, and evaluating preparedness for radiological terrorist incidents. Although OES does have a checklist that its Planning and Technological Assistance Branch uses to review plans, the checklist is only one page long and appears to be too general to ensure that OES conducts a formal and regular review of the emergency plan.

Although OES has not established a formal process to regularly review the emergency plan and its related annexes, other states regularly update their plans so that they may incorporate lessons learned into their plans. For example, Florida requires its emergency services agency to annually examine and review its emergency plan to reflect changes in its implementation, procedures, improved emergency preparedness capabilities, and deficiencies identified for corrective action. Further, Florida updates its plan every two years or earlier. Additionally, another state—Georgia—has a committee review its emergency plan each July, updating it as necessary. Two other states—Texas and Pennsylvania—update their plans annually and biennially, respectively.

Absent a formal and regular evaluation process for the emergency plan and its related annexes, these documents may not reflect current practices or provide sufficient guidance during an emergency. OES could make these assessments more consistent and effective if it developed a checklist in evaluating its emergency plan and related annexes. OES could use the checklist provided by the federal government as part of its recent effort to evaluate the emergency plan, but it should modify the checklist as necessary to meet the needs of California. In addition to more consistently reviewing the emergency plan and related annexes, OES can better prepare California for emergencies by consistently evaluating the use of SEMS by local governments, and by identifying areas in need of improvement.

Absent a formal and regular evaluation process, the emergency plan and its related annexes may not reflect current practices or provide sufficient guidance during an emergency.

OES HAS NOT CONSISTENTLY EVALUATED THE USE OF SEMS

OES is missing important opportunities to identify and make improvements to SEMS. This is because it fails to consistently and adequately prepare, or follow up on, the statutorily required after-action reports following declared disasters, and it does not follow its own policies of maintaining SEMS through regular meetings of its SEMS advisory board and technical group. Since

SEMS establishes the organizational framework through which multiple agencies can jointly respond to an emergency, it seems reasonable to expect OES to take a more proactive role in ensuring that this critical element of California's emergency response effort is consistently evaluated for further improvements and enhancements.

Following Emergencies, OES Is Not Consistently Preparing After-Action Reports to Review Its and Local Governments' Emergency Response Efforts

Perhaps the most effective way OES can evaluate the use of SEMS and identify weaknesses is through statutorily required after-action reports following each declared disaster. To ensure that OES evaluates its management of disasters, the Legislature included in the statutes authorizing SEMS a requirement that OES complete an after-action report within 120 days following a declared disaster that reviews OES's and other responding entities' response and recovery activities. OES's own regulations further clarify that after-action reports shall, at a minimum, be a review of response actions taken during an emergency, application of SEMS, suggested modifications to SEMS, necessary modifications to plans and procedures, identified training needs, and recovery activities to date. In its SEMS guidelines, OES states, "the SEMS approach to the use of after-action reports emphasizes the improvement of emergency management at all levels. The after-action report provides a vehicle for not only documenting system improvements, but also can, if desired, provide a work plan for how these improvements can be implemented." The text box summarizes the functions of after-action reporting that OES identifies in its SEMS guidelines.

The Important Functions of After-Action Reports

- A source of documentation of response activities.
- Identification of problems and successes during emergency operations.
- Analysis of the effectiveness of the components of SEMS.
- Describe and define a plan of action for implementing improvements.

Notwithstanding the importance that statute and OES's guidelines place on after-action reports, OES did not prepare such a report for four out of the 10 governor-proclaimed emergencies we reviewed. When we asked OES why the after-action reports were not prepared for these emergencies, it could only provide general reasons. Specifically, OES stated, "a [after-action] report was not initiated at times either due to the local entities not submitting a report, or in cases of events involving

single jurisdictions or a small number of jurisdictions, OES may determine that the public safety response or disaster recovery activities were not of such significance that an after-action report would be beneficial."

OES's explanation that the public safety response to an emergency "were not of such significance to warrant that an after-action report would be beneficial" is not persuasive. Emergency responses to governor-proclaimed emergencies are likely significant given the characteristics of such emergencies. Under statute, the governor is empowered to proclaim a state of emergency only when conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of people and property are likely beyond the capability of a single city or county. Out of the four governor-proclaimed emergencies for which OES failed to prepare after-action reports, two were for fires, one was for a flood, and the other was for a drought. While OES's argument that the public response activities during a drought were not sufficient to warrant an after-action report may have merit, the merits of taking the same position on the two fires and flood referred to above are less certain.

The Calaveras County (statewide fires) wildfire in September 2001 was one of the emergencies where OES did not prepare an after-action report. The governor proclaimed a state of emergency for this fire on September 10, 2001, stating that it was beyond the capabilities of the county. The governor also ordered all state agencies to engage in all activities to alleviate the emergency. According to OES records, the reimbursed damages from this wildfire totaled approximately $2.1 million. The second fire where OES did not prepare an after-action report was the 1997 Southern California Firestorm. According to OES records, the total reimbursed cost for the damages from this fire was approximately $13.2 million. Nevertheless, the value of after-action reports would not appear to diminish based on the limited number of entities responding to an emergency—as OES appears to suggest in its explanation above—because one of the principal benefits of the after-action reporting process is conveying the lessons learned during a proclaimed emergency. The statute mandating the after-action reporting process reflects the importance of this benefit when it states, "this report shall be made available to all interested public safety and emergency management organizations." Further, it would seem that after-action reports discussing the lessons learned by only a few counties or jurisdictions would still be of value to other counties that may face similar emergency situations in the future.

One of the principal benefits of the after-action reporting process is conveying the lessons learned during a proclaimed emergency.

OES's second explanation for not completing the after-action reports—citing local governments' failure to prepare and submit after-action reports—is similarly not persuasive. While obtaining after-action reports from participating local governments is an important element in preparing the State's after-action report, OES informed us that it does not have a system to ensure that local governments submit their reports. Further, while OES has established regulations requiring any city or county declaring a local emergency for which the governor has proclaimed a state of emergency to complete after-action reports, OES has not made completing such reports a prerequisite for receiving state reimbursement for response-related personnel costs.

When OES Did Prepare After-Action Reports, It Did Not Always Evaluate the Use of SEMS

Our audit also revealed that when OES did prepare after-action reports, it did not always evaluate the use of SEMS or develop recommendations for its improvement when weaknesses were identified. As noted previously, OES's own regulations require after-action reports to analyze the effectiveness of SEMS. However, out of the six after-action reports that OES did prepare following a proclaimed emergency, four reports did not evaluate the use of SEMS and focused instead on emergency relief and recovery issues. These four reports related to a drought, freeze, earthquake, and fire emergency. For the drought and freeze, OES explained that these proclaimed emergencies did not entail an emergency response, and SEMS was not used. In these instances, OES's explanation seems reasonable based on the type of emergency as it appears likely that the immediate response to drought or freeze emergencies would not involve the coordination of multiple agencies under SEMS. However, OES's justification for not evaluating the public's response to the fire and earthquake emergencies is less reasonable given that these are emergencies where there is an immediate public response to save lives, property, and the environment.

Of the six after-action reports we reviewed that OES did prepare following a proclaimed emergency, four reports did not evaluate the use of SEMS.

In explaining why OES's after-action report for the August 1999 fires did not address emergency response issues, OES indicated that an executive decision was made not to create an after-action report that specifically addressed response because responses to fires of this type "typically run smoothly." OES expanded on this explanation, stating that fire agencies in the State are in continual communication throughout the year and have many opportunities to discuss response issues relating to fires. OES provided a similar explanation when it clarified its

reasons for not preparing an after-action report for the Napa earthquake, stating that an executive decision was made not to conduct an after-action report due to there being no SEMS issues pertaining to the response effort. However, OES does not have the authority to make such executive decisions given that it is required by statute to prepare and distribute after-action reports following each declared disaster. Further, it is unclear how OES could conclude that no SEMS issues needed to be addressed if an after-action report, which reviewed the response and recovery efforts, was never prepared. Finally, an after-action report that concluded there were no SEMS issues would have had value in that it would provide validation to the emergency management community that SEMS is working appropriately. Ultimately, OES has a statutory responsibility to review the State and local governments' response and recovery efforts to an emergency, and to make improvements to SEMS for any weaknesses, concerns, or suggestions noted.

OES has a statutory responsibility to review the State and local governments' response and recovery efforts to an emergency, and to make improvements to SEMS for any weaknesses, concerns, or suggestions noted.

In the remaining two emergencies from our sample, in which OES prepared after-action reports reviewing the use of SEMS, OES did identify areas for improvement within SEMS. However, it could not always prove that these weaknesses were ever acted upon in the form of implemented recommendations. The two governor-proclaimed emergencies in this example related to the late December 1996 Floods and the February 1998 El Niño Winter Storms.

In OES's after-action report for the late December 1996 Floods, for which reimbursed damages totaled approximately $172 million, OES stated that no actual recommendations for improvement to SEMS were cited by the 22 state agencies and 71 cities and counties involved in the emergency. However, our review of the after-action reports submitted by some cities and counties responding to this emergency suggests otherwise. OES's after-action report indicates the need for additional and continued SEMS training, specialized guidance for special training, and the inclusion of private and volunteer agencies in SEMS training and workshops. In addition, OES notes the need for "increased operational communications between [county] Emergency Operation Centers, [OES-staffed] Regional Emergency Operations Centers, and the State Operations Center." In fact, the need for "increased operational communications" among the SEMS levels was a frustration for several local governments involved in this emergency, as noted in the "SEMS" comment sections of the after-action reports they submitted to OES. For example, Tuolumne County stated in its after-action report that it was "frustrating

at the state and regional levels because it took almost two hours for the OES duty officer to return calls, and that as the storms increased, the only communication from OES and the regional level were daily faxes." Tehama County similarly reported "long delays for confirmation of mutual aid requests and requests for supplies." Merced County had a more fundamental complaint about SEMS, stating, "the chain of command did not work." Specifically, Merced County indicated that when it attempted to contact the next level in SEMS, the regional center, the necessary people were unavailable and thus Merced County had to communicate directly with the state center, bypassing a level of SEMS. Merced County further cited the need for its emergency operation center (EOC) staff to be trained in SEMS, since they lacked this training prior to the emergency.

Although 11 other counties and cities involved in the late December 1996 Floods also reported various concerns with SEMS, the remaining 57 local governments generally reported that SEMS worked well, or they gave no comments. However, based on the above statements, it appears that some local governments experienced communication and coordination problems within the SEMS framework. When asked why OES did not develop recommendations to address the weaknesses in communications noted by some counties, OES responded by stating, "the State was in the early stages of implementing SEMS at the time [1996]. The State utilized many venues for obtaining SEMS improvement information [through] SEMS maintenance system committees that met regularly during that time as well as other meetings and conversations. Therefore, since SEMS was in its early stages, and OES had many other opportunities for input, an executive management decision was made at that time to not include recommendations in this report." While we do not disagree with OES that other venues were available for identifying opportunities for improvement to SEMS, the late December 1996 Floods were an early opportunity to evaluate the use of SEMS. Given the problems cited by 14 of the 71 cities and counties involved, it is evident that SEMS was not working entirely as intended, and that there was an adequate opportunity to identify needed changes to SEMS or provide additional training to local governments.

Of the 71 cities and counties involved in the late December 1996 Floods, 14 indicated problems with SEMS, thus providing OES an opportunity to evaluate the need for changes.

In May 2000, OES published its after-action report for the El Niño Winter Storms that began in February 1998. These storms resulted in 45 of California's 58 counties being declared federal disaster areas. OES records indicate that the damage caused by El Niño approached $374 million. In its after-action

report on this disaster, OES identified weaknesses in the SEMS system, such as the need for improved communication capacity at the EOCs and refresher training in SEMS because some emergency personnel were unfamiliar with its use. We presented OES with the recommended "action items" from this after-action report and asked OES to show how it acted on these items. OES was able to provide its rationale for rejecting some of the recommendations and generally explained how it addressed those recommendations it believed had merit.

OES Has Not Followed Its Own Policies for Formally Evaluating and Updating SEMS

After the SEMS statute became effective in 1993, OES recognized the need for developing a process to review and update SEMS on an ongoing basis. To address this need, OES established a formalized SEMS maintenance system, consisting of user groups that are to review SEMS issues and make recommendations to improve it.

Responsibilities of the SEMS Advisory Board

- Oversee the functions of the SEMS Maintenance System.
- Provide policy guidance and direction to the SEMS technical group.
- Set multiyear goals, objectives, and annual implementation work plans.
- Review, arbitrate, and make final recommendations regarding unresolved issues on guidance, training, and compliance.
- Make decisions on funding, scheduling, functions, and composition of the SEMS Maintenance System.
- Ensure participating agency and jurisdictional commitment to SEMS.
- Support and encourage SEMS implementation within member agencies at all levels.

As part of this SEMS maintenance system, OES established a SEMS advisory board consisting of emergency management response agency representatives who advise the OES director on all aspects of SEMS. The SEMS advisory board is chaired by the OES director and is composed of representatives from the California National Guard, California Highway Patrol (CHP), Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), police chiefs association, state sheriffs association, State Fire Marshal, each of the mutual aid regions, and several other groups. The specific responsibilities of the SEMS advisory board outlined in OES's SEMS guidelines are in the textbox. According to these guidelines, the SEMS advisory board was to be supported by two other groups, the SEMS technical group and the SEMS mutual aid regional advisory committees. The technical group and mutual aid regional advisory committees provide a broad base for state and local participation in the SEMS maintenance system. These groups also support the advisory board by compiling information that the advisory board needs in order to make recommendations on SEMS to the OES director.

The SEMS advisory board and technical group, which provide OES with advice on SEMS, have not met since July 1999 and September 2000, respectively.

While these entities were to meet regularly—either monthly or quarterly—OES informed us that the SEMS advisory board has not met since July 1999 and the technical group has not met since September 2000. OES attributes the absence of meetings to the decline in SEMS-related issues. According to an OES executive, "As SEMS has matured, the number of purely SEMS-related issues presented to the SEMS maintenance system has diminished. This may be related to the small number of disasters that have occurred over the last couple of years, as disasters tend to raise concerns about organizational issues. This decreasing number of issues has reduced the need for, and appropriateness of having committee meetings." The OES executive adds that while the SEMS advisory board and technical group have not recently met, the mutual aid regional advisory committees have been meeting. She asserted that these committees are the very basic component of the SEMS maintenance systems as they are most closely connected to the front-line local government emergency organizations. To some extent, she said, the system relies on these committees to identify significant systems-related issues that need to be addressed by other committees or OES. We requested OES to provide us with meeting agendas and minutes from these mutual aid regional advisory committees; however, upon reviewing the material that was provided, we saw limited evidence that these committees discussed SEMS or evaluated its use. In fact, a review of the material that was provided by OES did not indicate that SEMS was a frequently scheduled agenda item.

While OES asserts that it is not appropriate for the SEMS advisory board and technical group to be meeting given the limited number of recent disasters and concerns related to SEMS, there are benefits to these periodic meetings. Between the last time either of these two groups met in September 2000 and February 2002, there have been six proclaimed emergencies, including three fires, totaling $13.9 million in reimbursed damages. Each of these incidents represents an opportunity for SEMS to be evaluated and refined. Moreover, the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, have had a profound effect on emergency preparedness in the nation, and it would be prudent for OES to convene the two groups for this reason alone. Further, these meetings have value because of their impact on other relevant state agencies. For example, according to an official from the Department of Water Resources (Water Resources), the lack of SEMS advisory board and technical group meetings has left a large void in coordination and communication between the primary response and support agencies and OES. The Water Resources official noted that it is very important for OES to

ensure all response and support agencies meet on a regular basis to facilitate the critical coordination and communication necessary for emergency planning, response, and mitigation. In light of the terrorist activities and ongoing staff turnover, this Water Resources official believes that such meetings are more important than ever.

MANY GROUPS APPLAUD OES'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EFFORTS; HOWEVER, DATA PROBLEMS PREVENT OES FROM EVALUATING HOW WELL IT COORDINATES RESOURCES DURING EMERGENCIES

Most state and federal entities that we interviewed believe OES is doing a commendable job of coordinating with them to respond to emergencies and that OES keeps them well informed during emergencies. However, our review of how long it took OES to approve resource requests for various emergencies suggests that improvements can be made. According to data recorded in OES's RIMS, the computer system used to track resource requests, we noted that OES failed to approve resource requests within its own guidelines in 13 out of 27 instances. In addition, we noted that RIMS is not being used to its potential since system users are not consistently entering the time when OES tasked resources arrived at the emergency. With accurate data on resource arrival times, OES could evaluate whether resources are arriving promptly to emergencies. Finally, the OES's Fire and Rescue Branch continues to use a manual, paper-based process to track resource requests despite the problems inherent in this type of process.

Federal and State Agencies Interviewed Regarding OES's Performance

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency
2. California Highway Patrol
3. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
4. California Department of Health Services (Health Services)
5. California Department of Mental Health (Mental Health)
6. California Department of Food and Agriculture (Food and Agriculture)
7. California Department of Water Resources

Most Federal and State Entities Interviewed Commend OES's Coordination Efforts During Emergencies

During the audit, we interviewed six state departments that typically coordinate with OES during an emergency, as well as FEMA, in order to gain their perspectives on how well OES coordinates and responds to emergencies.

Most of the departments interviewed have high regards for OES's coordination efforts. Many departments cited OES's ability to keep their agency thoroughly informed about developing emergencies as one of OES's main strengths. Three out of the

six state departments interviewed, as well as FEMA, agree that OES does well in coordinating and responding to emergencies. Some of these entities cite OES's communication with other departments and dedication to emergency management as the main strength. Health Services was one such entity, stating that its coordination with OES and overall intelligence gathering is enhanced through its access to RIMS. Health Services notes that RIMS is useful for tracking statewide response information, but that a shortcoming of RIMS is that it does not operate in "real time." CDF cited its role as OES's coordinator at five of the six fire and rescue mutual aid regions and many of their operational areas as a reason why the two departments can coordinate effectively. CDF also stated that it works with OES during nonfire emergencies at the state center and at county EOCs. CDF believes that because of personnel changes and the infrequency of major disasters and/or routine exercises using SEMS, many state agencies and local governments may not be as knowledgeable of emergency operations as they should be to effectively manage a major emergency. Mental Health reports it has a good relationship with OES based on the quality of staff at OES and their level of dedication to emergency management. The two departments have worked closely together through 17 disasters and have refined working systems. According to a Mental Health official, if a recommendation for improvement is to be made, it is that RIMS be simplified. RIMS is a bit confusing to use because it is not a program that is used on a daily basis, and when it is used, it is under stressful conditions where simplification would be beneficial.

FEMA also views OES in a positive light. The director of the response and recovery division within FEMA's region IX, the region that covers California, said OES and FEMA "have never had any problems coordinating with each other during emergencies." This executive added that OES has done a good job in coordinating by remaining in daily contact through its duty officers and the State's 24-hour warning center. Further, because it has access to RIMS, FEMA can monitor developing situations in California using data from RIMS. The executive also cited OES's daily situation reports, prepared every morning, as an example by which the two agencies stay in contact during emergencies. Overall, the executive we spoke to indicated that OES deserves "an A+" for its coordination and response efforts and is a model for all other states in emergency management. According to this executive, California has better resources for all types of emergencies compared to other states. She added that the federal government is developing a national incident management system that used SEMS in its development.

A FEMA executive we spoke to indicated that OES deserves "an A+" for its coordination and response efforts and is a model for all other states in emergency management.

Two of the six departments interviewed, CHP and Food and Agriculture, stated they are not tasked by OES to respond to emergencies. A CHP official indicated that it is a part of the law enforcement mutual aid agreement, and as such works directly with the agency in charge of the incident. Because the CHP is located throughout the State, the CHP official indicates it is more efficient to work directly with local governments than to work through OES. Food and Agriculture similarly could not assess OES's performance since it obtains resources tasked by OES during an emergency, as opposed to being tasked by OES to respond. Nevertheless, Food and Agriculture indicated that OES has been very helpful in coordinating its requests and getting it the needed resources. As we note on page 30, Water Resources was concerned about the lack of SEMS advisory board and technical group meetings.

Inaccurate and Missing Data in RIMS Prevents OES From Evaluating How Well It Coordinates Resources During Emergencies

Because OES is not using RIMS to capture accurate mission approval times and resource arrival times, it lacks data to evaluate how well it coordinates emergency responses. Mission approval times are important because the faster OES approves a resource request, the faster resources are likely to arrive on scene. To guide its mission approval process, OES established response time guidelines in April 2000 that specified the maximum amount of time OES should take to identify available resources and then estimate the time of arrival under various types of emergencies. When making a request, local agencies inform OES when they desire the requested resources to arrive on-scene. Thus, when an agency calls OES to request resources, OES should identify and approve the tasking of resources within these time frames. For example, if an agency sends a request for a helicopter crew to release water onto a fire, citing an imminent threat to life, OES guidelines state that this request should be approved within 20 minutes.

Mission approval times are important because the faster OES approves a resource request, the faster resources are likely to arrive on-scene.

In order to evaluate how promptly OES approved resource requests, we compared the time OES received a request to the time it approved it for 27 mission requests that occurred between January 1997 and September 2001. Even though OES's approval guidelines were established in April 2000, we applied these guidelines to pre-2000 resource requests because no prior approval guidelines existed and OES did not raise any objections to applying them. OES indicated that these time guidelines were

developed based upon the practices and judgments made by experienced OES emergency managers. OES further indicates that these thresholds were to be used as a decision guide and not a standard, and were not to be the only basis for decision-making for determining whether to task mutual aid or state agency resources. Finally, OES says these guidelines made sense for their stated purpose, which was to assure requesting agencies that OES would not take an unreasonable amount of time in determining whether or not to use mutual aid resources—at no cost to the State—or to task state agency resources. Thus, applying these time guidelines to pre-2000 resource requests would appear to be reasonable.

Of the 27 resource requests we reviewed, OES approved 13 later than SEMS guidelines allow, and approval data was missing in RIMS for two other requests.

As shown in Table 2, our testing found that RIMS data showed that OES appeared to approve 12 mission requests within the SEMS time guidelines. However, 13 of the 27 resource approvals were late, and we were unable to determine the approval time for two of the requests. The late approvals ranged from 14 minutes to up to 25 hours beyond the SEMS guidelines. For example, citing a potential threat to life, Napa County sent OES a request at 8:44 a.m. on September 4, 2000, for CDF personnel to assist with the aftermath of an earthquake. Under its guidelines, OES should have approved this request within 30 minutes. However, RIMS data indicate that OES did not approve the request until 10:23 a.m. on September 5, 2000, or more than 25 hours late. When asked about this and the other 12 late approvals, OES explained that it did approve seven of these resource requests before the requestors desired the resources to arrive on-scene. However, this explanation is inadequate since OES's guidelines apply to the time period between when OES receives the resource request and ultimately approves the mission, as opposed to whether OES approved the request before the resources were requested to arrive at the emergency. For the other six requests that OES approved late, OES explained that it was likely that coordination began immediately for two requests, resources were already on-scene and immediately responded for one request, resources were likely to have already been en route for another request, additional coordination was most likely needed due to the nature of the fifth request, and OES did not explain why its approval was late for the sixth request. Further, OES explained that it often does not issue a mission number and enter information into RIMS until after the initial request has been made and coordination has already begun over the phone; thus, the RIMS approval time data for these 13 requests was possibly inaccurate. By continuing to communicate important

TABLE 2

Inaccurate and Missing Data in RIMS Prevents OES From Evaluating Its Coordination and Response Efforts

Threat Level*	Resource	OES Approval Process			Resource Response Times	
		Local Agency Request Date/Time	OES Approval Date/Time	Approval Lateness	Date/Time Resource Needed	Date/Time Resource Arrived
Imminent threat to the environment–40 minutes	Helicopter bucket operations for water drop	8/22/01 5:23 PM	8/22/01 5:32 PM	on time	8/22/2001	unknown
Potential threat to life–30 minutes	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) to provide plans chief and plans staff positions	9/4/00 8:44 AM	9/5/00 10:23 AM	25 hours 9 minutes	ASAP	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	CDF strike team for flood fight	1/16/98 12:46 PM	unknown	unable to tell	unknown	1/17/98 2:30 AM
Potential threat to property–40 minutes	California Conservation Corps crew to remove debris from creek	1/23/97 3:44 PM	1/23/97 4:03 PM	on time	unknown	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Helicopters to stand by for fire service	9/23/97 7:51 PM	9/23/97 9:04 PM	43 minutes	9/24/97 8:00 AM	unknown
Imminent threat to life–20 minutes	Helicopter bucket operations for water drop and transport	9/6/01 7:03 PM	9/6/01 7:18 PM	on time	9/7/01 8:00 AM	unknown
Potential threat to life–30 minutes	Personnel and equipment to assist with debris removal	11/5/99 1:20 PM	11/5/99 5:16 PM	3 hours 26 minutes	11/6/99	unknown
Imminent threat to the environment–40 minutes	California National Guard to activate its Crisis Action Center to support helicopter operations	8/21/01 8:12 AM	8/21/01 8:22 AM	on time	8/21/01	unknown
Imminent threat to environment–40 minutes	Water drop for fire suppression	8/24/01 5:43 PM	8/24/01 5:52 PM	on time	8/20/01 9:00 AM	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Helicopters and support for water drop	8/20/01 7:31 AM	8/20/01 7:50 AM	on time	8/20/01 8:00 AM	unknown
Imminent threat to life–20 minutes	Law enforcement officers to assist with evacuations and to provide security	9/6/01 12:28 PM	9/6/01 12:36 PM	on time	ASAP	unknown
Imminent threat to life–20 minutes	Law enforcement personnel to support fire operations	8/19/01 7:28 PM	unknown	unable to tell	8/20/01 AM hours	8/20/01 5:00 AM
Potential threat to life–30 minutes	Engineering and technical specialist to provide expertise on water projects	9/11/01 4:37 PM	9/11/01 5:31 PM	24 minutes	9/12/01	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Flood fight crews	2/24/98 4:39 PM	2/24/98 7:29 PM	2 hours 20 minutes	2/25/98 8:00 AM	unknown

continued on next page

Threat Level*	Resource	OES Approval Process			Resource Response Times	
		Local Agency Request Date/Time	OES Approval Date/Time	Approval Lateness	Date/Time Resource Needed	Date/Time Resource Arrived
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Fly geologist and county building official to assess erosion area	2/16/98 7:01 PM	2/17/98 8:04 AM	12 hours 33 minutes	2/17/98 9:00 AM	unknown
Potential threat to life–30 minutes	CDF personnel to assist the California Department of Transportation with highway cleanup	2/8/98 1:23 PM	2/8/98 5:00 PM	3 hours 7 minutes	unknown	2/8/98 8:55 PM
Imminent threat to life–20 minutes	Helicopter ambulance to stand by for air evacuation	2/7/98 9:55 AM	2/7/98 12:17 PM	2 hours 2 minutes	2/7/98 1:00 PM	unknown
Imminent threat to life–20 minutes	Technical assistance to build flood levee	3/2/98 2:41 PM	3/2/98 5:39 PM	2 hours 38 minutes	ASAP	unknown
Imminent threat to life–20 minutes	Cargo trucks and personnel for evacuation	2/3/98 2:36 AM	2/3/98 4:04 AM	1 hour 8 minutes	2/3/98 8:00 AM	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Hand crew for sandbagging	2/7/98 10:09 PM	2/7/98 11:34 PM	55 minutes	2/7/98 10:00 PM	unknown
Potential threat to the environment–50 minutes	Personnel to analyze water samples	1/14/97 1:52 PM	1/14/97 2:10 PM	on time	1/15/97	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Geologist to evaluate stability of site	1/23/97 3:15 PM	1/23/97 3:34 PM	on time	1/27/97	unknown
Potential threat to property–40 minutes	Highway equipment and crews to block flood waters	1/7/97 5:12 PM	1/7/97 6:06 PM	14 minutes	1/7/97 4:30 PM	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Hand crew for sandbagging	1/24/97 10:55 PM	1/24/97 11:07 PM	on time	unknown	unknown
Imminent threat to property–30 minutes	Hand crew for sandbagging	1/22/97 7:22 PM	1/22/97 7:39 PM	on time	1/23/97 8:00 AM	unknown
Potential threat to property–40 minutes	Cargo trucks for evacuation	1/24/97 6:47 PM	1/24/97 7:12 PM	on time	1/25/97 11:00 AM	unknown
Potential threat to life–30 minutes	Personnel and laboratory resources to test drinking water quality	1/13/97 12:33 PM	1/13/97 1:33 PM	30 minutes	ASAP	unknown

Unknown: We could not determine the date and time because OES either did not enter it or entered it in error.

ASAP: The requesting agency indicated that it needed the resources as soon as possible instead of specifying the time it needed the resources.

Unable to Tell: We could not determine whether OES approved the requests on time because RIMS did not have the needed information.

On Time: OES approved the resource requests within the time limits set by its internal guidelines.

* The time noted is the time limit allowed by OES's internal guidelines to approve resource requests.

information over the phone rather than by using RIMS, OES may still experience the problems with manual processes that RIMS was designed to eliminate. However, our testing did reveal that OES has improved its mission approval times since the implementation of its guidelines in April 2000.

Furthermore, for 24 of the 27 resource requests that we reviewed, RIMS users did not input resource arrival times, even though RIMS provides a field for that information on the electronic status form. OES explained that RIMS does not consistently track the exact time that resources arrive on scene. Those records are maintained with either the sending or receiving agencies. The way these resources are tracked by the agencies varies depending on the type of resource, type of event, and scale of the event. Although OES's explanation has merit, recording resource arrival times would allow OES to measure the time it takes for resources to arrive on scene by comparing the arrival times to the desired arrival times of the requesting agency. With this information, OES could evaluate whether resources are arriving promptly to emergency sites while better tracking the resources tasked to emergencies.

If it recorded resource arrival times, OES could evaluate whether resources are arriving promptly to emergency sites while better tracking the resources tasked to emergencies.

The benefits of such an evaluation appear to have been clear to OES since it stated in its RIMS feasibility study report that resource arrival times would be entered into RIMS for post-emergency analysis. Specifically, the feasibility study report indicated that the success of RIMS in achieving its objectives would be analyzed and documented in the after-action reports for each disaster by having resource requests time-stamped when forwarded up to the next SEMS level. Further, the report stated that the OES mission coordinator would enter the actual arrival time of the resources in RIMS.

Moreover, for the remaining three resource requests for which OES did input resource arrival times, the desired arrival times were not input for two. Without the requesting agencies' desired arrival times, OES cannot measure if the resources arrived timely to emergencies. Similarly, OES could not measure how quickly the resources arrived to the incident for the third resource request because the requesting agency specified the desired arrival time as the morning hours. Thus, none of the RIMS data for these 27 resource requests was usable for OES to measure how quickly resources arrived to incidents.

The OES Fire and Rescue Branch Does Not Use RIMS When Coordinating OES and Local Agency Resources, and May Encounter Problems With Its Manual Processes

The Fire and Rescue Branch continues to use manual processes to task emergency resources, and thus may still encounter the same inefficiencies cited in the RIMS feasibility study report.

In 1995 OES prepared a feasibility study report on the development and implementation of RIMS. This report discusses the purpose of replacing manual resource request processing with RIMS because of the many business problems associated with the manual process. Despite these reported problems and the availability of RIMS, OES's Fire and Rescue Branch informed us that it currently uses a manual resource request system when tasking resources to incidents in response to mutual aid requests. According to OES, its Fire and Rescue Branch coordinated the response of more than 1,800 fire engines to mutual aid requests during 2001. The Fire and Rescue Branch only uses RIMS when tasking resources of other state agencies. When asked why this is the case, OES indicated that RIMS does not have all of the functionality listed in its feasibility study report. OES went on to explain that its current process has been used for more than 33 years and is a tested and proven emergency management system, which was one of the major elements of the SEMS legislation.

Nevertheless, a manual process is less efficient than an automated process, which may explain why the Fire and Rescue Branch plans to implement a new software application. According to the RIMS feasibility study report, one problem with manual request processing is the backlog of resource requests, which results from an inability to process requests in a timely manner. Prioritizing large numbers of paper requests based on threat and time need depends on the skills of the personnel involved. Also, the chaotic environment of a major disaster response may result in paper-based requests being lost. An additional problem with manual resource request processing is the misdirection of response resources. This may result from an inability to direct or allocate resources according to need due to misinformation or lack of information. Misinformation usually occurs from verbal- and fax-based response systems, where information is relayed verbally or rewritten manually with errors. Lack of information results from the difficulty of moving information through each level of the response community. To address these problems and to improve the efficiency of requesting resources, RIMS was designed to replace OES's manual resource tracking process. However, the Fire and Rescue Branch continues to use manual processes and may still encounter the problems inherent with these processes. The RIMS feasibility study

report—which OES prepared to justify the need and expense to develop RIMS—states RIMS shall integrate fire function into RIMS without negatively impacting the existing fire communication and mutual aid system.

Further, the manual process that the Fire and Rescue Branch uses does not gather certain key data. The Fire and Rescue Branch fills out paper cards as part of its manual resource tracking process, but they do not provide a field for staff to enter the date and time that a resource arrives on scene. As a result, the Fire and Rescue Branch cannot determine whether resources are arriving to emergencies within a reasonable amount of time, and we were unable to test whether resources tasked by the Fire and Rescue Branch arrive promptly to emergencies. The Fire and Rescue Branch plans to use the Multi-Agency Incident Resource Processing System (MIRPS), which is used by CDF, by the next fire season. However, MIRPS also does not capture resource arrival times. Therefore, the Fire and Rescue Branch will still be unable to demonstrate whether resources are arriving in a timely manner.

OES NEEDS TO ENSURE KEY STAFF ARE PROPERLY TRAINED

Citing a lack of funding, OES has not conducted a needs assessment to determine the training needs for management and workers that staff the state and regional centers. To determine whether OES had provided adequate training to its staff in responding to emergencies, we asked OES to show us the training courses that it had identified as key to its staff fulfilling their responsibilities. We focused our assessment on the state center staff, because the state center coordinates the State's response to emergencies. We also determined if OES developed training requirements for staff in the regional centers because they coordinate the response at the regional level and are OES employees.

OES states that it would like to have a training program for all its staff, but has not developed formal training requirements for personnel in its state and regional centers because it does not have the funding to pay for the training.

A representative for the director's office notes that OES acknowledges its need to identify key training for its staff. She states OES would like to have a training program for all its staff, but it has not developed formal training requirements for personnel in its state and regional centers because it does not have funding for the training. OES does not appear to be unique in not identifying the training needs of its emergency response staff. None of the four states we contacted had developed a formal training plan that identifies the training needed by staff coordinating its

emergency response efforts. However, two of the four states we talked to noted that they were developing training plans that would identify training needs.

OES has developed an individual training plan (training plan) program that identifies an individual employee's career goals and objectives, the knowledge required to meet those goals and objectives, and the training required to obtain the knowledge. However, OES had only developed training plans for seven of the 14 state center staff we reviewed. Furthermore, OES has not developed guidance for all of its supervisors preparing training plans to ensure that training related to core competencies is included in the plan. Although the training plan can be a useful tool, because OES does not use it for all state center staff and does not provide guidance to all supervisors preparing training plans, OES cannot ensure that all state center staff receive the training they need to effectively respond to emergencies.

CLARIFICATION OF THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OHS AND OES WOULD BE BENEFICIAL

The director of OES believes that a press release accompanying the executive order made it clear that OHS would provide terrorism-related coordination, but that it did not address any shifts in the organization of state government.

As discussed in the Introduction, in February 2003 the governor established OHS within the Office of the Governor. Some of the responsibilities assigned to OHS by the executive order and to the director of OES appear to have the potential to overlap. For example, under the act, the director of OES is assigned the responsibility of coordinating the emergency activities of all state agencies during a state of war emergency or other state emergency, and every state agency and officer is required to cooperate with the director in rendering assistance. Further, under the act, the extraordinary powers granted to the governor to mitigate emergency situations may be delegated by the governor to the director of OES. However, under the executive order, OHS is assigned the responsibility of coordinating security efforts of all departments and agencies of the State and the activities of all state agencies pertaining to terrorism-related issues, and is designated as the principal point of contact for the governor. Moreover, the director of OES is required to report to the governor through OHS, but that reporting function is not limited to issues relating to state security or terrorism, and thus appears to require OES to make all reports to the governor through OHS. Finally, an organizational chart located on the State's Web site suggests that OHS has oversight responsibility over OES. Therefore, it appears that the responsibilities of OHS and OES may overlap.

We asked the OES and OHS to clarify their respective roles and responsibilities, and both indicated that they believe the executive order is clear. The director of OES further commented that while state agency administrators typically report to the governor through his various policy assistants, he believes the executive order formalizes the day-to-day reporting relationship that OES and the Office of Criminal Justice Planning have with OHS with respect to matters assigned to OHS. He acknowledges that he reports to the director of OHS for terrorism-related issues. However, he also states that the press release that accompanied the executive order made it clear that OHS would provide coordination of all state agencies for terrorism-related issues, but that it did not address OES specifically or any shifts in the organization of state government. He added that California, like many other states, is going through a process to review and build upon its existing systems and organizations to assure that it has the best system possible to address terrorism. He continued by saying that during this process, there will undoubtedly be times when the organizational relationships are both complex and evolving.

The director of OHS believes he has "across the board" authority for all areas of OES's operations.

In his statements to us, the director of OHS acknowledged that reorganization and change is difficult. Further, because his focus is homeland security, he acknowledges that he would be more involved with terrorism-related issues. However, in contrast to the perspective of the director of OES, the director of OHS believes he has "across the board" authority for all areas of OES's operations. A lack of clarity in OHS's and OES's respective roles and responsibilities could adversely affect the State's ability to respond to emergencies, such as a terrorist event.

Given that OES is established by statute, and OHS is established by executive order, further clarification of the respective roles and responsibilities of OES and OHS could help avoid misunderstandings, particularly if OHS is envisioned as a permanent part of state government. For example, under the California Constitution, the governor may assign and reorganize functions among executive officers and agencies in the manner provided by state law. Under state law, when the governor determines that reorganization of state agencies is in the public interest, he has authority to prepare a reorganization plan to the Legislature for review, which may become effective as early as 60 days following submission. Alternatively, legislation could clarify the roles of OES and OHS, particularly with respect to the coordination of state agencies during an emergency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the emergency plan and its related annexes are regularly evaluated and updated when necessary, OES should develop and follow formal procedures for conducting regular assessments of these plans to determine if updates are required.

To ensure that SEMS remains a workable method to respond to emergencies, OES should more consistently evaluate its use and identify areas of weaknesses and needed improvements. Specifically, OES should do the following:

- Institute internal controls to ensure it receives after-action reports from all responding entities to an emergency, such as requiring after-action reports prior to reimbursing local agencies for response-related personnel costs. Further, OES should ensure that the reports by local governments evaluate the use of SEMS for any needed improvements and enhancements.

- Prepare after-action reports after each declared disaster that review emergency response and recovery activities.

- Develop a system that tracks weaknesses noted in the after-action reports, which unit is responsible for correcting those weaknesses, and what corrective actions were taken for each weakness.

- Reconvene the SEMS advisory board and technical group to foster more communication among emergency response agencies on the use of SEMS, and to provide OES advice and recommendations on SEMS.

To evaluate its own performance during emergencies and identify areas for improvement, OES should take steps to ensure that it can accurately track how long it takes to approve resource requests and pinpoint when those resources arrived at the emergency. To help facilitate this process, OES should use RIMS to accurately capture this information for subsequent analysis.

To help ensure that OES's Fire and Rescue Branch efficiently approves and tracks resource requests, OES should use an automated system to accurately track these requests and accurately record arrival times. That automated system should be RIMS unless OES can sufficiently justify the additional benefits and expense of using another system. Further, because it indicated in the feasibility study report for RIMS that the Fire and Rescue Branch would use RIMS,

OES should ensure that the scope of future information technology systems is clearly disclosed to parties that are making the decision whether to fund these systems.

To ensure that state agencies—including itself—are adequately prepared to respond to emergencies within the State, OES should determine the most critical training that emergency operations center staff, at the state and regional levels, need in order to fulfill their duties, and then allocate existing funding or seek the additional funding it needs to deliver the training.

To ensure the State is adequately prepared to address emergencies, OHS should work with the governor on how best to clarify the roles and responsibilities of OHS and OES. ■

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CHAPTER 2

Equipment Concerns May Impact OES's Future Ability to Respond to Emergencies

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) has had difficulty acquiring and maintaining emergency response and communication equipment due to what it asserts is inadequate funding. Specifically, 26 percent of OES's active fire engines have been in service for longer than the 17-year useful life that OES has adopted. OES also has no heavy urban search and rescue vehicles, which help extricate people from collapsed structures, despite a statutory mandate to obtain these vehicles. With aging equipment, and other equipment not in place, OES's ability to task its own resources during an emergency may be limited. OES has recently acquired sufficient funding to replace its aging fire engines and has taken steps to replace older fire engines, but its request for 18 heavy urban search and rescue vehicles was not funded. However, OES has not performed a current needs assessment to determine how many heavy urban search and rescue vehicles it needs in order to respond to an emergency within one hour, as required under statute.

Further, OES has not tried to establish the thermal imaging equipment-purchasing program required by law. OES's failure to take the statutorily required steps to establish this program may have denied local governments from taking advantage of an opportunity to obtain this equipment at a lower cost than they could obtain on their own. While OES believes that it will be extremely difficult to implement this program absent a funding allocation, the law requires OES to start the program with its own funds or other sources.

Finally, OES is facing a problem with its Operational Area Satellite Information System (OASIS), a satellite network that serves as a backup communications system, which is degrading and threatens OES's ability to coordinate with local governments should phone communications become disabled during a major emergency.

ALTHOUGH THE FIRE AND RESCUE BRANCH RECENTLY ACQUIRED MORE FIRE ENGINES, 26 PERCENT OF THE FLEET HAS EXCEEDED THE 17-YEAR USEFUL LIFE OES HAS ADOPTED

The creation of the fire engine program in 1951 was the result of a federal civil defense program to match state funds for the purchase of fire and rescue equipment. The program was based on the idea that no single fire department can afford to purchase and maintain sufficient fire equipment to combat a major natural disaster or war-caused fire. OES indicates that over the years the mission of the fire engines has changed to include wildland firefighting, emergency medical response, structure protection, flood fighting, hazardous materials response, and urban search and rescue. OES now considers these fire engines the State's contribution to the statewide fire and rescue mutual aid plan. The Fire and Rescue Branch's fleet of 115 fire engines is assigned to local fire departments throughout the State. OES permits the use of the fire engines for mutual aid response, local multiple alarm fires, training, and other needs. In exchange for using the fire engines, when called upon by OES or by another agency for mutual aid, the local government is required to dispatch the fire engine with the necessary personnel to any emergency in the State. Even while OES has acquired 32 model year 2000 and 2001 engines in the last three years, there are still 30 (26 percent) of the 115 fire engines in the entire fleet that have exceeded their useful life of 17 years as shown in Figure 6. OES adopted a 17-year useful life based on the typical use of its fire engines, and it believes this standard is consistent with the standards set by other fire agencies in the State.

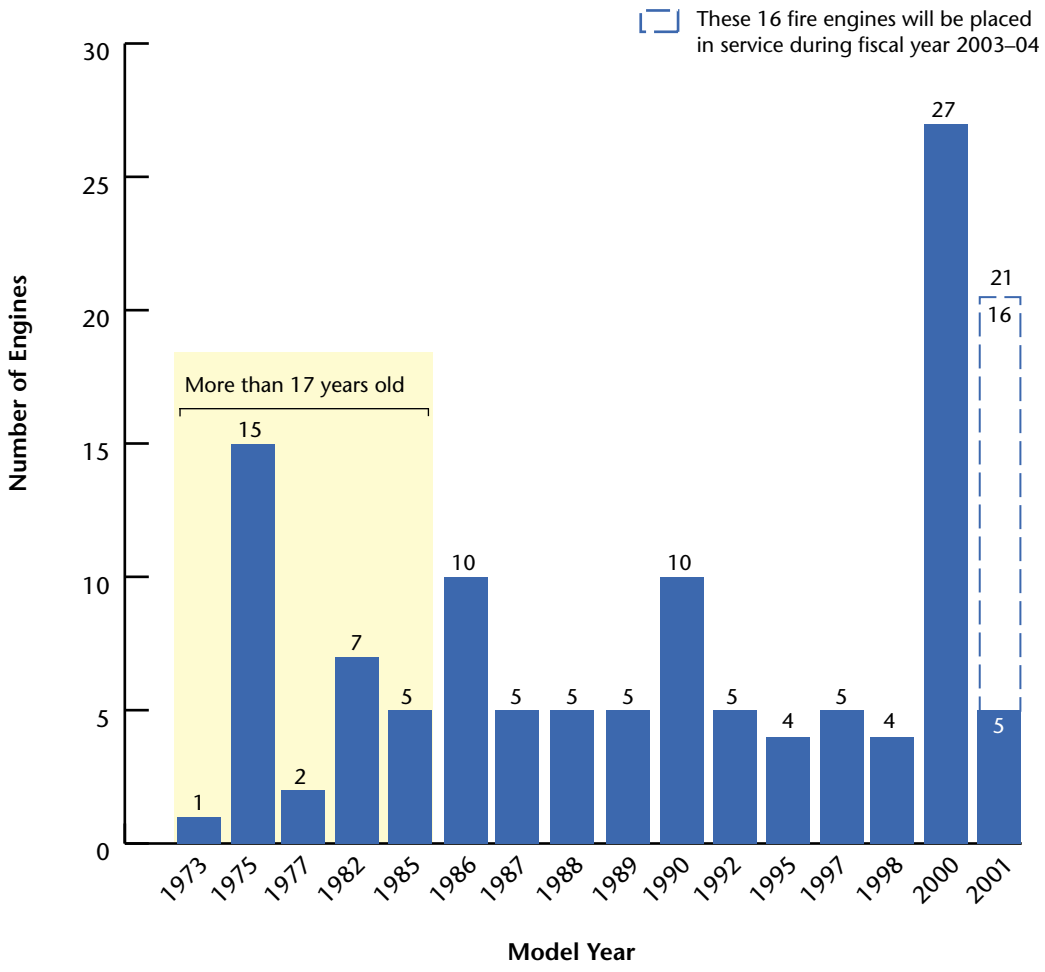
OES indicates that major shifts in funding over the years has prevented it from consistently allocating funding to replace older engines.

A large portion of the fire engine fleet today is aging because OES did not always maintain a systematic process to replace aged fire engines. OES indicates that it experienced major shifts in funding over the years, preventing it from consistently allocating funding to replace older engines. However, in fiscal year 1998–99, OES received a General Fund appropriation of $5 million to purchase new fire engines. This onetime funding augmentation was initiated by a group of 20 legislators to accelerate the replacement of deteriorating fire engines because at that time, approximately half of the engines in the fleet were more than 22 years old. In fiscal year 2000–01 OES received additional funding of $750,000 annually, and beginning in fiscal year 1999–2000, OES indicates that it allocated $1 million of its annual operations budget to the fire engine program.

These funds are intended to replace and maintain at least seven fire engines and related equipment annually at a cost of approximately $236,000 per fire engine and related equipment.

FIGURE 6

OES Has Received an Influx of New Fire Engines; However, 30 Engines Exceed Their Useful Lives



Source: Data from the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Fire and Rescue Branch. The Fire and Rescue Branch has adopted a 17-year useful life for its fire engines.

As a result of these recent efforts, the fire engine fleet has received a significant influx of new fire engines. Since April 2001, OES purchased and deployed 27 model year 2000 and five model year 2001 fire engines. In addition, our review of outstanding purchase orders shows it plans to acquire and place into service an additional 16 fire engines in fiscal year 2003–04. Further, to enhance the fleet, OES ordered 12 water tenders—specially designed water trucks built to bring water to rural and urban areas for firefighting. While it appears OES took appropriate steps to improve the efficiency and safety of the fire engine fleet and to implement a replacement schedule, there are still a significant number of older vehicles in the fleet.

Even with the recent purchases, 26 percent of the fleet's fire engines exceeds their useful lives. The age of the trucks could affect their safety, operational reliability, and effectiveness. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends that fire engines not built to current standards or manufactured prior to 1979 be considered for upgrading or replacement due to significant improvements in safety in the newer models. For example, fire engines should include fully enclosed seating to keep firefighters safe, protected from the environment and informed of what is occurring, and they should have their sirens modified to prevent hearing loss. OES believes that 25 fire engines require modifications for fully enclosed seating to keep firefighters safe, while 41 fire engines require their sirens be modified to prevent hearing loss. Currently, the fleet includes 18 fire engines made before 1979. However, OES indicates that it does refurbish older fire engines to conform to current safety standards. For example, OES recently ordered safety bars to help secure firefighters for the 25 fire engines that do not have enclosed seating areas. The reliability of the fire engines, however, is not always determined by their age. The NFPA suggests that the useful life of a fire engine also depends on factors such as mileage, quality of its maintenance, and quality of the driver training program. According to the OES fire chief, all of the fire engines in the fleet, including the older engines, are reliable and can be dispatched to emergencies anywhere in the State. Our review of daily status reports for the fleet for March 2003 confirms the fire chief's assertion, as fire engines were out of service only 7.1 percent of the time. Moreover, the out-of-service rate for fire engines that were more than 17 years old was at 7.7 percent—slightly higher than the entire fleet rate of 7.1 percent. While older fire engines may not be used as often by local fire departments, these older fire engines are not necessarily unreliable. The effectiveness of the fire engines

The effectiveness of fire engines is hampered by age when considering the better capabilities of newer models.

is hampered by age when considering the capabilities of newer models. For example, OES indicates most of its newer fire engines carry a light urban search and rescue capability and are compatible with modern equipment, such as firefighting foam-proportioning systems that can extend the effective use of water by more than six times because they extinguish fires more efficiently.

OES HAS NOT ACQUIRED HEAVY URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE UNITS AS REQUIRED BY LAW

The OES Fire and Rescue Branch is responsible for the overall management and coordination of the urban search and rescue system in the State. Urban search and rescue involves the location, extrication, and initial medical stabilization of people trapped in confined spaces. Although structural collapse is the most common cause of entrapment, transportation accidents, mines, and natural hazards such as floods are also potential causes.

OES relies on the capabilities of local governments for heavy urban search and rescue services, but it does not know for certain the number of local government heavy urban search and rescue vehicles that exist.

Under the Urban Heavy Rescue Act of 1988 (1988 act), the OES Fire and Rescue Branch is required to acquire and maintain heavy urban rescue units and transportable caches of search and rescue gear, including hand tools and protective gear. Further, the branch is required to position this equipment throughout the State to ensure a rapid response of personnel and equipment in the event of a major earthquake. It was the Legislature's intent that the State have a rapid heavy urban search and rescue capability in the event of such an emergency. However, OES has not retained this equipment, and, as a result, it cannot provide the State with this capability. While OES had three heavy units at one time, today OES relies on the capabilities of local governments for heavy urban search and rescue services. However, since OES does not know the number of local government heavy urban search and rescue vehicles, in addition to its lack of a current needs analysis of vehicles necessary to protect the State, it is uncertain whether California can respond capably to a major earthquake.

While OES does certify urban search and rescue vehicles as heavy, medium, and light, and maintains a listing of these vehicles, OES's certification is limited to those fire departments that request OES to inspect and categorize this equipment. For example, in fiscal year 2002–03 OES certified eight heavy urban search and rescue units at seven fire departments in the State. OES maintains information on these pieces of equipment and their

location. OES then uses the information to process mutual aid requests to get the appropriate resources to an incident. However, OES does not know the capability of all fire departments statewide because it does not always perform annual equipment inventories, and it relies on local governments to request urban search and rescue equipment certifications. OES indicates that it is aware of 16 heavy urban search and rescue units at 14 fire departments statewide. Based on reports from five years ago, when there were 19 more "heavy" vehicles than today, the complete and accurate reporting of all fire departments may be in doubt. An understated inventory of such equipment may impact the timeliness of an emergency response because there may be closer units to the emergency that have not been included in OES's inventory. Further, the units that OES does know about are in seven of California's 58 counties and may not be available for out-of-jurisdiction use during emergencies for long durations.

An understated inventory of heavy urban search and rescue equipment may impact the timeliness of an emergency response because there may be closer units to the emergency that have not been included in OES's inventory.

In addition, 28 national urban search and rescue task forces are available to respond to the State's urban search and rescue needs through a partnership agreement between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the State, and local governments. Eight of these 28 task forces are in the State and are sponsored by local fire departments. Five of these eight task forces are in Southern California; the remaining three are in Northern California. Each task force consists of 70 members with specialized skills in areas of rescue, canine search, medical, and other technical specialties. OES maintains a monthly on-call activation schedule for the eight task forces to assist local governments in emergencies. Requests for task forces are channeled through the normal fire and rescue statewide mutual aid system. However, only OES, with the approval of the governor, can authorize their activation for statewide use. While the task forces appear to provide skilled urban search and rescue personnel, they may not have dedicated vehicles to transport their equipment. Further, the task forces do not represent the rapid response heavy urban search and rescue vehicles contemplated in the 1988 act. In the past, OES did have a limited heavy urban search and rescue fleet. The Fire and Rescue Branch designed and constructed three prototype heavy rescue/fire "pumper" vehicles in 1979. However, OES indicates they were too heavy, underpowered, and did not comply with the current standards for heavy rescue equipment. Between August 1998 and July 2001, local governments that were assigned these three vehicles placed them in reserve status and now use them for training.

In order to address its limited inventory of these units, OES submitted a funding request in fiscal year 2001–02 to the Department of Finance for a onetime budget increase of approximately $7.1 million for the purchase of and annual maintenance for 18 heavy urban search and rescue units. The request was included in the Governor's Budget, but was ultimately not funded in the budget act for fiscal year 2001–02. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether the 18 units called for under the budget request would meet the statute's requirements. OES indicates that if the request was funded, it had planned to place three heavy urban search and rescue units in each of the State's six mutual aid regions. OES justified the need for 18 units based on an analysis it performed in 1988, which it believes is still current today. However, we believe that an updated needs assessment is critical because OES should understand the capacity existing in the State and where additional heavy urban search and rescue units should be best placed to respond to a major disaster. Lacking a current needs assessment, OES is unable to justify that the State should purchase more heavy urban search and rescue units.

An updated needs assessment is critical because OES should understand the capacity existing in the State and where additional heavy urban search and rescue units should be best placed to respond to a major disaster.

OES HAS NOT ESTABLISHED A THERMAL IMAGING EQUIPMENT-PURCHASING PROGRAM AS REQUIRED BY LAW

OES has not taken action to establish the thermal imaging equipment-purchasing program. Enacted into law during October 2001, the Firefighting Thermal Imaging Equipment Act of 2001 requires OES to administer an equipment-purchasing program to help local governments acquire thermal imaging equipment. The law recognized that this equipment increases firefighters' ability to work safely in a smoke-filled environment by allowing them to see and maneuver in smoke, locate the fire, and identify victims and other firefighters more quickly, thereby saving lives and money. According to this act, the cost of thermal imaging equipment ranges from $18,000 to $25,000 per unit. However, the equipment-purchasing program intends to use the State's buying power to acquire thermal imaging equipment at a lower cost than local governments could obtain on their own. Under the law, OES does not bear the entire cost of the equipment because the participating local governments must pay half the cost of the equipment OES acquires on their behalf.

Statutorily Required Steps OES Shall Take to Administer the Thermal Imaging Equipment-Purchasing Program

1. Not later than 45 days after October 13, 2001, the effective date of the act, OES will establish an advisory committee that will include representatives from various firefighter associations. OES will consult with the advisory committee on equipment specifications and acquisition matters.
2. The advisory committee should meet within 30 days after OES establishes it.
3. Within 120 days after its first meeting, OES should consult with the committee to formulate equipment specifications.
4. Within 180 days after the committee formulates equipment specifications, OES will enter into a multiyear contract with a reliable vendor to purchase the equipment at the lowest possible cost.

To guide OES's efforts to implement this program, the law requires OES to take specific steps within certain time frames. The text box shows steps for OES to follow when establishing the program. For example, the first step requires OES to establish an advisory committee that includes members from firefighting organizations. OES is to consult with this advisory committee on specifications and other matters on the acquisition of this equipment. For example, the advisory committee could assist OES to determine the State's current thermal imaging equipment capabilities and the extent that local governments need this equipment. Moreover, the law requires that the contract OES signs with a vendor include a provision allowing any local government or state agency to purchase the equipment directly from the vendor at the contract price. Thus, even if OES were not able to pay its half of the cost, interested local governments could purchase equipment under the OES contract, which, with the State's buying power, would presumably be less expensive than if the local governments purchased the equipment on their own. OES is also responsible for identifying the funding for its share of the program cost from grants, private corporations, or other sources, including its own funding.

OES believes that it will be extremely difficult to implement this program absent a funding allocation. However, OES's position contradicts the governor's intent for the program when he signed it into law. Specifically, when signing the bill the governor stated, "In signing this bill, I am directing OES to begin establishing the program within existing resources. State revenues have fallen $1.1 billion below projections. While I am strongly committed to protecting state public safety and firefighting efforts from budget reductions, I have no choice but to oppose additional General Fund spending." Thus, it is clear that the governor intended OES to start the program from its own funds or other sources. Further, OES's failure to take the statutorily required steps to establish this program may have denied local governments the opportunity to obtain thermal imaging equipment at a lower cost as the statute intended.

OES'S SATELLITE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM IS DEGRADING, THREATENING ITS CAPABILITY TO COORDINATE WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD THE PHONE SYSTEM FAIL DURING AN EMERGENCY

The backup communications system that OES uses during emergencies is aging and may need replacement in the near future. As a result, OES's ability to coordinate with local governments during an emergency may be limited if the public phone system fails. The OASIS is OES's primary backup voice and data communications system to assist it in responding to emergencies. When available, OES primarily uses the public phone system to communicate with other state agencies and local governments during an emergency. However, the need for a backup phone and data communications system grew out of OES's experiences in several disasters, mainly the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989, when OES discovered the public telephone network was vulnerable to overloading. Such overloading could occur when too many people used the telephones during an emergency, or if telephone lines were damaged. Thus, OES's coordination and response efforts could be significantly hampered.

OES notes it has become difficult to maintain OASIS because of its age.

OES notes it has become difficult to maintain OASIS because of its age. For example, the vendor indicates that the radio components are difficult and costly to repair because of their design and because they are becoming aged and obsolete. Further, OES indicates that weather and environmental conditions have degraded the system's hardware components and the wiring that connects them. Similarly, existing OASIS radio components are no longer in production and cannot be replaced. OES also indicates that the vendor is becoming increasingly reluctant to support radio repair and maintenance services because the existing radios are no longer in production and are not repairable. Because OASIS is a proprietary system, only one vendor is able to assist and advise on OASIS operational issues.

OASIS became fully operational in 1994. It links with all 58 counties, special districts, state agencies, and FEMA. As a satellite-based system, OASIS was intended to immediately restore telephone communications in disaster areas, allowing for quicker damage reporting, distribution of recovery resources, and restoration of law and order. OASIS also provides the primary communications systems in remote areas where the public telephone system is not readily available. For example, using its mobile OASIS receivers, OES is able to provide communications systems to coordinate resources during wildland fire emergencies.

Considering the potential failures during an emergency of the public phone system, OES developed the capacity to send data from its Response Information Management System (RIMS) through OASIS. RIMS depends on OASIS as the backup data line to interface with counties and special districts. However, OES believes that the existing OASIS transmission speeds may be inadequate considering the need to quickly send RIMS data such as resource requests, maps, and situation reports during an emergency.

OES has not secured funding to upgrade OASIS.

OES has not secured funding to upgrade OASIS. OES estimates that the cost to repair and upgrade OASIS, which would include replacing aging hardware components, wiring, and improving data transmission speeds, at $1.9 million. OES indicates these repairs and upgrades will extend OASIS's useful life an estimated five to seven years; however, it has not sought or identified funding in its current budget to modernize OASIS. Therefore, OES is unsure when these repairs and upgrades to OASIS will occur.

OES recently negotiated a maintenance service contract with the vendor for $675,000, or $225,000 annually for three years. OES believes that the proposed contract minimizes extraordinary OASIS maintenance costs because it indicates the vendor, as part of the service contract, be responsible for all but a few of the necessary repairs. However, the contract appears to provide a temporary solution to maintaining OASIS and minimizing current-year replacement costs. For example, the contract includes a provision to replace up to 30 of the 80 failing OASIS radios at a maximum rate of 10 per year for three years. OES indicates that it previously replaced 10 of the 80 radio systems in fiscal year 2001–02 at a cost of $10,000 each. OES believes that the remaining 40 radios that are not included in the maintenance contract may require replacement. Thus, OES will continue to maintain an aging system when the as yet unexecuted three-year contract expires.

Further complicating OES's ability to maintain and upgrade OASIS is the fact that the proposed contract with the vendor has not been finalized. The original maintenance contract with the vendor expired on October 30, 2002. Although OES submitted a contract amendment for a time extension to the Department of General Services (General Services), it was denied because OES submitted the paperwork to General Services after the original contract expired. OES indicates that it prepared a proposal to replace OASIS and reviewed this proposal from October 2002 to January 2003, largely to determine if funding could be allocated. In January 2003, OES decided against the upgrade and

In February 2003, seven counties were out of service for up to two weeks because of OASIS radio failures and another county has not been in service for two years.

moved to renew the previous contract. However, OES did not approve the noncompetitive bid justification until late March 2003. OES recently received the noncompetitive bid approval from General Services for this contract and expects to execute it sometime after the passage of the State's budget. Thus, OES has no current maintenance contract with OASIS. Since November 2002, OES indicates that several counties have experienced communication failure due to radio-related problems. For example, in February 2003, seven counties were out of service for up to two weeks because of OASIS radio failures and another county has not had service for two years because the OASIS radio system and cable harness have weathered and are not recoverable. OES plans to replace this county's radio system when the new maintenance contract is executed, which includes the replacement of up to 10 radio systems annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that it and local governments have the equipment to adequately respond to emergencies, OES should take the following actions:

- For its fire engine program, OES should continue with its schedule for replacing older and poor performing fire engines in the fleet.

- To appropriately meet its statutory requirement to acquire and maintain heavy urban search and rescue equipment, OES should perform a needs analysis to determine the number of these units that are required to respond to a major earthquake. As part of this needs analysis, and to allow it to assess the extent that more units are needed and where they should be placed, OES should determine and maintain records of the existing urban search and rescue capacity in the State. If this needs analysis concludes that additional units are required, OES should submit a budget change proposal to acquire this equipment, and it should develop a maintenance and replacement schedule for this equipment.

- To allow local governments access to lower cost thermal imaging equipment, OES should initiate the statutorily required steps to establish a purchasing program for this equipment. These steps should include determining interest among local governments in purchasing this equipment. OES should identify funding from grants, private corporations, or other sources, including its own funding, to pay for its half-share

of the equipment cost. However, if OES determines that it cannot identify funding sources to pay for its share, OES should explore the use of the State's buying power to enter into a contract that allows local governments to purchase this equipment at a lower cost.

- To ensure that it has a backup system to communicate with local governments and agencies during a major disaster, OES should study options to extend the life of or replace OASIS. However, if it concludes that OASIS should be replaced, OES should justify this replacement by demonstrating that maintenance costs are exorbitant and that OASIS is down for excessive periods for repair. Further, OES should work with General Services to resolve the delay in obtaining an approved contract for a vendor to maintain OASIS and, in the future, prepare and submit contracts to allow sufficient time for General Services' review and approval. ■

CHAPTER 3

Although Counties Appear to Have Adequate Emergency Plans and Training, Some Emergency Operation Centers Are Better Equipped Than Others

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) assists local governments in developing their emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation plans for various types of emergencies. OES's assistance ranges from the review of local government plans to the participation and monitoring of drills and exercises. Our review of six county emergency operation centers (EOCs) revealed that most have adequate emergency response plans that use the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). Further, we noted that the six EOCs take adequate steps to prepare their staff for emergencies by training them in SEMS procedures and the use of the Response Information Management System (RIMS). Most of these EOCs also perform exercises to practice the skills their emergency management personnel acquired from the training classes and to identify any difficulties they could encounter during an actual disaster. However, even though most of the EOCs we visited appear to have adequate plans and training, a survey that OES performed of all counties' primary and alternate EOCs revealed that many need improvement and potentially costly upgrades. As a result, many EOCs may be unable to manage emergencies without disruption to their operations. OES is using the results of its survey to apply for federal funding to address the weaknesses uncovered by its assessment of county EOCs.

MOST COUNTIES WE VISITED HAVE ADEQUATE PLANS THAT MEET OES STANDARDS

We found that five of the six EOCs we visited have adequate emergency response plans that include most of the critical elements of emergency management. Four of these five EOCs followed guidance that OES issued to help the local governments develop an emergency plan that conforms to SEMS. Although one of the

five EOCs did not specifically use this guidance, we found that its emergency plan did conform to SEMS. However, we found that one EOC's emergency plan predates the required implementation of SEMS for local governments and does not incorporate all the critical elements of an adequate emergency management plan.

In January 1999, OES issued guidance to local governments to aid them in preparing an emergency plan. This guidance identified critical elements that an emergency plan should contain. Some of these elements include initial response features such as the relationship between the field responders and the EOC; EOC procedures that cover such activities as activation, deactivation, emergency declaration process, and coordination; and recovery operations that outline procedures for damage assessment, documentation process, and preparation of after-action reports. OES's goal was to help local governments develop emergency plans that incorporate SEMS as their emergency management system.

Four of the six EOCs we visited used OES's guidance to develop their emergency plans and followed the suggested format.

Four of the six EOCs used this guidance to develop their emergency plans and followed OES's suggested format. As a result, the plans for these EOCs contained most of the necessary elements that OES suggests local governments include in their emergency plans. However, because the OES's guidance is optional, we found that one of the EOCs we visited chose not to use this guidance to develop its emergency plan. Nevertheless, when we compared its emergency plan to OES's guidance, we found that although the format was different from the one OES suggested, the emergency plan addressed all the critical elements that OES identified in its guidance.

However, the emergency plan for one of the EOCs is outdated and does not contain all the critical elements identified by OES. Specifically, the law requires that each local agency use SEMS to coordinate multiple jurisdiction operations by December 1996. SEMS is intended to standardize response to emergencies involving state and local governments. However, this EOC prepared its existing emergency plan in 1988 with additional materials added in 1990, six years before the required implementation of SEMS. As a result, its plan did not incorporate the use of SEMS as the county's primary system for managing emergencies. The emergency services manager for this EOC stated that although the emergency plan did not incorporate SEMS, the county formally adopted SEMS in November 1995, and employees receive ongoing training in SEMS. He further stated that the county has used SEMS to manage declared emergencies since 1995. However, we believe that it is prudent to have an

emergency plan that outlines all the procedures that staff should follow during an emergency. The emergency services manager informed us that the EOC is updating its emergency plan using the OES guidance to incorporate SEMS and other critical elements and expects to complete this update by March 2004.

MOST COUNTIES WE VISITED PROVIDE APPROPRIATE TRAINING FOR THEIR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

The EOCs we visited make adequate efforts to prepare their staff for emergencies by providing training and using exercises to practice emergency response. We found that they train the appropriate staff in the use of SEMS and RIMS. In addition, four of the six EOCs we visited use tabletop exercises to familiarize personnel with their roles during an emergency. Further, four of the six EOCs participate in functional or full-scale exercises that simulate a live event for a particular disaster. Based on the results of the tabletop and functional or full-scale exercises, the EOCs determine what additional training is needed to improve staffs' coordination and response time.

All six EOCs we visited ensure that appropriate personnel attend SEMS and RIMS training.

We found that all six EOCs we visited ensure that appropriate personnel attend SEMS and RIMS training. These training sessions are designed to help the staff understand their roles and responsibilities during an emergency and how and when to use RIMS to request resources. The EOCs provide these training sessions on an ongoing basis to their operations staff to help ensure they are current on any changes to the SEMS and RIMS procedures. For example, one of the EOCs most recently provided this training to its personnel in March and October 2002. Similarly, the other five EOCs provided this training to their staffs within the past year.

In addition to providing training on SEMS and RIMS, four of the EOCs we visited also train their staff using tabletop exercises. The tabletop exercises help the staff discuss and understand their roles and responsibilities using a simulated emergency. For example, one of the EOCs held a tabletop exercise in October 2002 to assess and exercise the adequacy of local and communitywide emergency plans to respond to a terrorist incident and determine strengths and weaknesses in the local coordination. The exercise scenario included detecting and identifying a public health emergency, identifying causative agents and initiating the response to the incident, and mitigating

and restoring efforts. Similarly, the remaining three EOCs also held at least one tabletop exercise in the past year to simulate such events as hazardous materials release, chemical weapons, and bio-terrorism.

Most EOCs We Visited Also Participate in Functional or Full-Scale Exercises to Prepare for Emergencies

Most of the six EOCs we visited participated in functional or full-scale exercises within the last three years to prepare their personnel for actual emergencies. However, one EOC has not participated in a functional or full-scale exercise in at least four years. A functional exercise simulates an emergency in the most realistic manner possible without moving people and equipment to an actual disaster site, whereas a full-scale exercise takes place on location and is as close to the real event as possible, involving first responders and equipment whenever possible. These exercises generally involve emergency personnel from multiple agencies or jurisdictions. By participating in such exercises, the EOCs can practice their emergency plans and prepare their personnel for actual emergencies.

Three Types of Exercises That EOCs Hold to Practice Their Skills

Tabletop
Simulates an emergency scenario in an informal discussion format.

Functional
Simulates an emergency in the most realistic manner possible without using response personnel and equipment.

Full-Scale
Simulates an emergency that involves the use of response personnel and equipment.

For example, one of the EOCs we visited performed a functional exercise in November 2002 based on a simulated terrorist attack on the county. The exercise scenario assumed a series of explosions, including three containing radioactive material, in seven cities within the county. Many entities participated in this exercise, including several cities within the county, the State OES, 21 county departments, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, California National Guard Civil Support Team, Civil Air Patrol, California Highway Patrol, United States Department of Transportation, special districts, and numerous nongovernment agencies. Based on the results of this exercise, the EOC identified, among other things, the need for additional training in several areas including SEMS and handling of public information.

The other four EOCs also held a functional or full-scale exercise within the past three years. For example, one of the EOCs simulated an earthquake scenario in October 2002 as part of its functional exercise. Another EOC also performed a functional exercise in October 2002 to simulate a flood emergency. The third EOC participated in a full-scale exercise in October 2000 to test response capabilities using a simulated ground collision of

two airplanes at an airport. The remaining EOC indicated that it participated in a functional exercise that simulated a hazardous materials mitigation in May 2003.

One EOC has not performed a functional or full-scale exercise since at least 1999, which the deputy director of the county's office of emergency services attributes to inadequate staffing and funding. However, the deputy director informed us that a full-scale exercise would be held later this year, pending the approval of a federal grant.

SOME EOCS ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO COORDINATE AND RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES THAN OTHERS

Our review of the OES's survey results and our visits to six county EOCs indicate that some EOCs are better equipped to coordinate and respond to emergencies than others. OES's survey indicates that all county EOCs lack at least some portion of the necessary components. We noted similar conditions at the six county EOCs we visited. We found that all lack at least a portion of the necessary components to minimize any disruption to emergency management operations during emergencies. Some of the inadequacies we found include having an EOC in a location that does not avoid traffic congestion, having inadequate space to accommodate personnel during an emergency, and lack of adequate physical and cyber security measures.

OES's Survey Evaluated the EOCs in Five Main Categories

Flexibility
Scale operations and adapt operational space to the all-hazards event.

Sustainability
Support operations for extended durations without interruption.

Security
Guard against potential risks and protect operations from the unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information.

Survivability
Sustain the effects of a realized risk and continue operations from the EOC or fully capable alternate location.

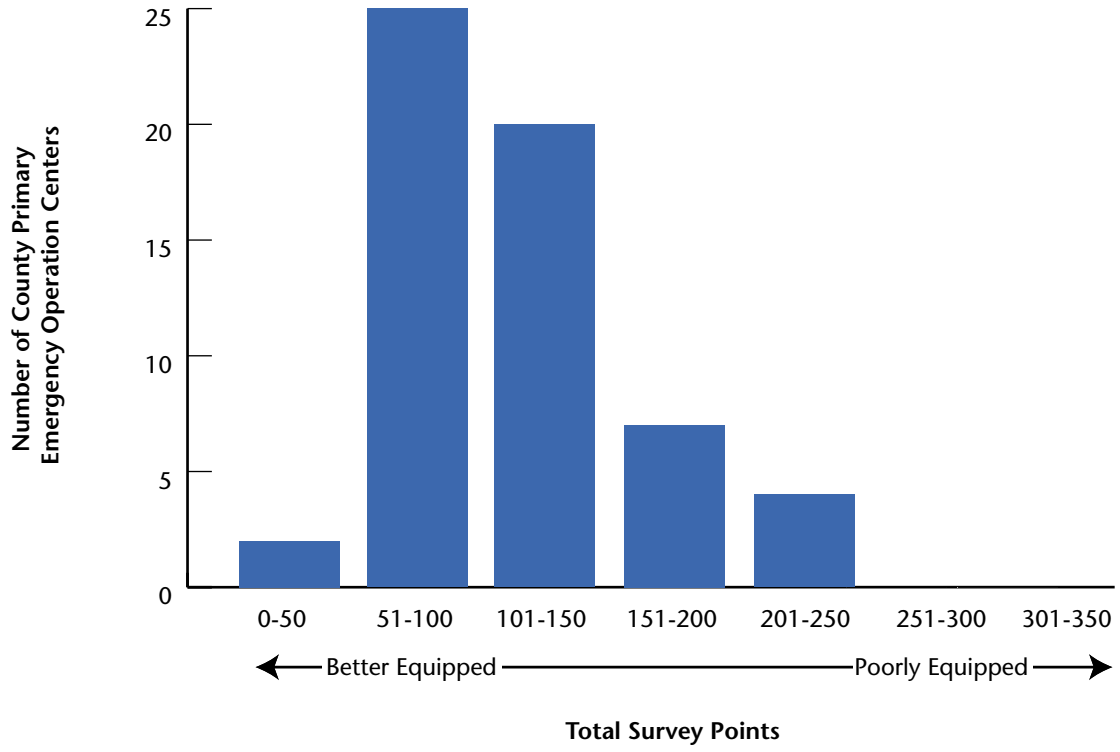
Interoperability
Share common principles of operations and exchange routine and time-sensitive information with local jurisdictions, state level EOCs, and FEMA's network of operations centers.

As part of its application for federal funding, OES performed a survey of the primary and alternate EOCs for all counties and selected cities, state departments, and Indian tribes to determine how much improvement each EOC needs. We discuss OES's methodology in more detail in the Appendix. OES surveyed each EOC in five main categories. According to the results of OES's survey, the counties' primary EOCs are most vulnerable in their ability to accommodate operations during emergencies (flexibility) and survive the effects of a disaster (survivability). For example, they lack such things as a dedicated conference room; sleeping quarters; a backup generator; and a protection system for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear agents.

As Figure 7 shows, 11 of the 58 primary county EOCs received a score of more than 150 points out of a possible 345 points. The higher scores indicate greater need for improvement and being the least prepared to coordinate emergencies. Further, although the other 47 primary county EOCs received less than 150 points, only two primary county EOCs received less than 50 points, indicating that they are well equipped for emergencies. The remaining 45 primary county EOCs were in the mid-range of scoring, receiving between 51 and 150 points, indicating a need for improvement to their operations.

FIGURE 7

Most County Primary Emergency Operation Centers Have Room to Improve Operations



Source: The Governor's Office of Emergency Services' March/April 2003 survey of county EOCs.

The varying conditions of primary county EOCs were evident during our site visits. For example, although one of the six EOCs we visited lacks a protection system for chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear agents, and would not survive a blast, shrapnel, or heat from high explosives, overall this EOC appears to have the necessary components to adequately manage

The varying conditions of primary EOCs were evident during our site visits at six county EOCs.

emergencies. This EOC had adequate space and the necessary communication equipment and security measures to effectively manage its operations. OES defines adequate space as having at least 50 square feet per person.

In contrast, another EOC we visited is in a natural high-risk area for floods, and the EOC informed us that the facility would not be able to withstand a flood. Further, this EOC also lacked adequate space to accommodate personnel during an emergency. As a result, this EOC could become inoperable during an emergency or would not be able to effectively coordinate due to its lack of adequate space to accommodate the necessary personnel during an emergency. The deputy director of this county's office of emergency services stated that lack of funding is the basic problem and that currently the county does not have an ideal building or facility to house an EOC.

The adequacies of the other four primary county EOCs that we visited also ranged from needing little improvement to having major deficiencies. For example, two EOCs need the most improvement with their ability to scale operations and adapt operational space to disaster conditions (flexibility) and the other two need the most improvement with their ability to interact better with other entities during disasters (interoperability). Further, three of them also need to correct deficiencies associated with their ability to survive a disaster (survivability).

Similarly, we noted from the survey that one of the counties responded to OES that its primary EOC is located in a high-risk area, lacks adequate security measures, cannot provide necessary personnel with 24-hour access to the EOC, and its computer systems are not protected against cyber attacks. As a result, this EOC's capabilities could be seriously undermined during a disaster.

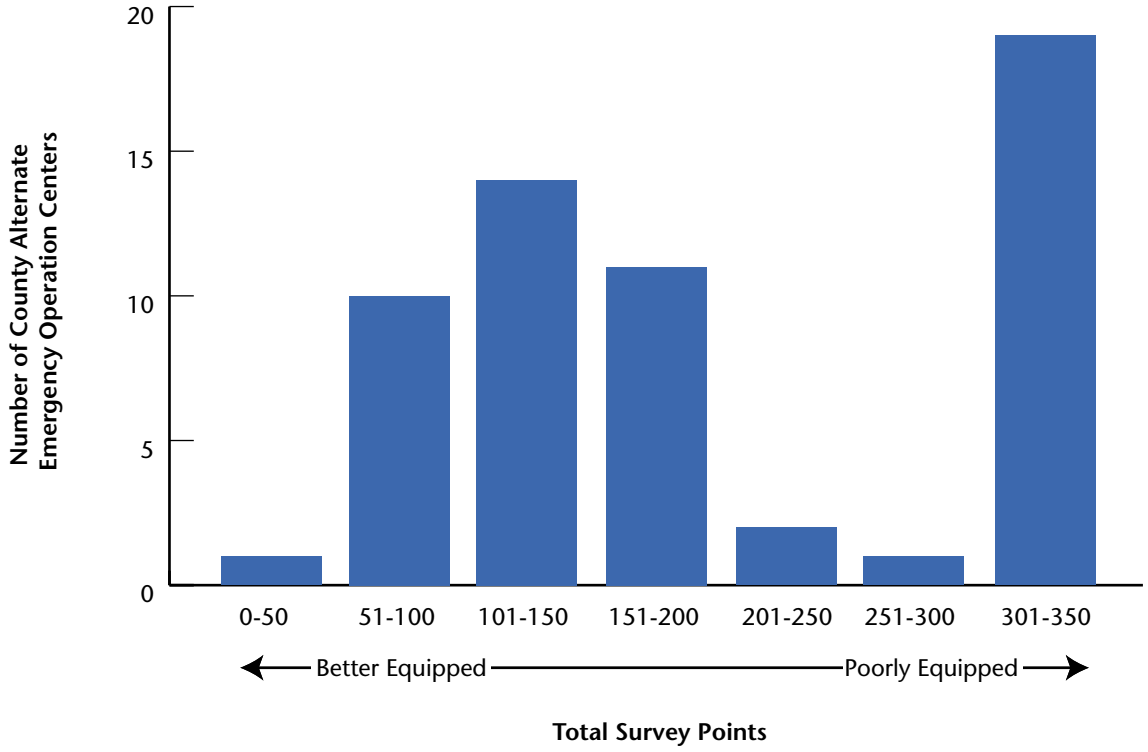
Many Counties Have Poorly Equipped Alternate EOCs and Several Do Not Have Them at All

In addition to having poorly equipped primary EOCs, some counties have poorly equipped alternate EOCs as well. Further, some counties do not have an alternate EOC. A county would move its operations to an alternate EOC if its primary EOC becomes unusable. Our review of county responses to OES's survey found that 18 of the 58 counties do not have an alternate EOC. Thirteen of these counties also have a relatively poorly equipped primary EOC. Thus, these 13 counties would likely have some difficulties managing emergencies.

As shown in Figure 8, alternate EOCs for most counties are generally in worse conditions than the primary EOCs or do not exist at all. (If a county did not have an alternate EOC, it received a score of 350 points.) For example, alternate EOCs for 33 counties scored above 150 points on OES's survey indicating a need for greater improvements. More than half of these 33 alternate EOCs scored above 300 points. An alternate EOC for only one county scored less than 50 points on OES's survey, indicating that it is likely to be adequately equipped to respond to emergencies.

FIGURE 8

Many Counties Do Not Have an Alternate Emergency Operation Center or Their Facilities Need Improvement



Source: The Governor's Office of Emergency Services' March/April 2003 survey of county EOCs.

A poorly equipped alternate EOC compounds the problem for a county that also has an inadequate primary EOC.

A poorly equipped alternate EOC compounds the problem for a county that also has an inadequate primary EOC. For example, one of the counties we discussed earlier is in a high-risk area that lacks adequate security measures, cannot provide necessary personnel with 24-hour access to the EOC, and its computer systems are not protected against cyber attacks. This county stated that conditions exist that would require it to relocate its EOC. However, in OES's survey this county noted that it does not have an alternate EOC. Consequently, in the event that the primary EOC becomes unusable, this county would need to find another location to continue its emergency operations. However, doing so during an emergency situation would hamper this county's ability to coordinate and manage resources.

The counties that we visited attribute lack of adequately equipped primary EOCs and alternate EOCs to lack of funding. For example, the deputy director of the office of emergency services for one county we visited stated that his county's primary EOC is not an ideal facility to conduct emergency operations. The EOC is located in a basement of a building and is not permanently set up with necessary equipment to coordinate and respond to emergencies. He stated that the county does not have sufficient funding to set up such an EOC.

OES's survey efforts are aimed at getting federal funding to help the counties bring their EOCs up to standards to effectively coordinate and respond to emergencies. Although OES informed us that the Federal Emergency Management Agency would determine the awards for the local government EOCs, it currently does not know how much federal funds the local government EOCs are expected to receive.

We conducted this review under the authority vested in the California State Auditor by Section 8543 et seq. of the California Government Code and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. We limited our review to those areas specified in the audit scope section of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

ELAINE M. HOWLE
State Auditor

Date: July 30, 2003

Staff: John Baier, CPA, Project Manager
Grant Parks
Ana Clark
Joanne Liu
Kris Patel

APPENDIX

Results of OES's Survey of County Emergency Operation Centers

As part of its application for federal assistance, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) performed a survey of the primary and alternate emergency operation centers (EOCs) for all counties and selected cities, state departments, and Indian tribes. OES developed the survey questionnaire and evaluated the results of the surveys using the guidelines that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided. The survey evaluated the EOCs' abilities to adapt to various situations, to support operations for extended durations, to protect against potential risks, to sustain the effects of realized potential risk, and to interact with other entities.

OES prioritized the survey questions using the guidelines provided by FEMA and scored the EOCs' responses to the survey. This score reflects the readiness of each EOC. A higher survey score indicates less readiness because the survey dictated that a higher score be given for responses indicating less readiness. In addition, OES determined a risk-related score by assessing points associated with risk factors such as the likelihood of earthquakes, fire, and flood in each county using various internally and externally available data. OES also added risk points based on the population served by the EOC, assuming that the money spent on preparedness in more populated areas would have higher benefit per capita than in less populated areas. The final score (the sum of the survey and risk-related scores) reflects the urgency of corrective actions required to have each EOC adequately prepared to respond to emergencies considering its readiness and the risks associated with the area it serves.

OES submitted these results to FEMA as part of its application package for federal assistance and estimated the funding need for California at about $76 million to correct the weaknesses noted for the primary EOCs of counties, cities, state departments, and Indian tribes. FEMA has not yet awarded any grants, therefore, the amount of grant funds for California is unknown. OES informed us that although any awarded grant funds would pass through OES, FEMA plans to determine the amount that each EOC would receive to improve its readiness.

Tables A.1 and A.2 on the following pages show the scores that each county's primary and alternate EOCs received. The higher final scores indicate greater need for funding and improvement.

TABLE A.1

Survey Results for Primary Emergency Operation Centers

County	Survey Categories							Total Survey Points	Risk-Related Points	Final Score
	Introduction	Flexibility	Sustainability	Security	Survivability	Interoperability	Desirables			
County 1	6	13	0	7	10	5	1	**42**	178	**220**
County 2	3	6	4	0	4	0	3	**20**	213	**233**
County 3	6	12	16	15	10	9	7	**75**	285	**360**
County 4	6	17	8	12	20	8	3	**74**	328	**402**
County 5	6	13	12	4	14	12	3	**64**	344	**408**
County 6	3	42	33	17	39	9	7	**150**	268	**418**
County 7	3	15	0	7	22	4	0	**51**	410	**461**
County 8	0	20	7	22	24	4	1	**78**	403	**481**
County 9	3	12	12	15	30	24	7	**103**	409	**512**
County 10	0	21	17	3	20	8	4	**73**	451	**524**
County 11	3	16	17	15	22	17	3	**93**	439	**532**
County 12	6	34	28	7	32	37	7	**151**	395	**546**
County 13	0	15	8	11	23	12	4	**73**	487	**560**
County 14	3	11	8	10	25	32	3	**92**	487	**579**
County 15	3	23	26	16	32	16	0	**116**	476	**592**
County 16	3	31	17	7	27	12	7	**104**	503	**607**
County 17	3	21	11	12	17	49	3	**116**	494	**610**
County 18	0	3	8	2	32	20	0	**65**	557	**622**
County 19	0	12	6	11	36	24	0	**89**	539	**628**
County 20	6	24	14	12	26	15	0	**97**	553	**650**
County 21	6	17	10	4	23	20	4	**84**	582	**666**
County 22	3	22	16	7	32	20	4	**104**	575	**679**
County 23	6	26	17	2	18	7	3	**79**	604	**683**
County 24	3	24	10	21	8	24	3	**93**	628	**721**
County 25	0	19	18	18	20	4	6	**85**	640	**725**
County 26	3	22	17	18	18	29	3	**110**	630	**740**
County 27	3	26	26	20	26	35	0	**136**	612	**748**
County 28	3	16	16	13	44	35	7	**134**	621	**755**
County 29	6	16	22	9	38	4	3	**98**	664	**762**
County 30	6	17	25	5	21	9	4	**87**	681	**768**
County 31	6	15	13	4	36	5	3	**82**	698	**780**
County 32	6	11	32	1	34	12	1	**97**	692	**789**
County 33	0	19	20	21	40	8	3	**111**	709	**820**
County 34	6	21	25	15	22	25	3	**117**	726	**843**
County 35	6	19	4	11	28	8	0	**76**	781	**857**
County 36	0	26	20	17	16	33	0	**112**	749	**861**
County 37	0	19	18	10	20	28	4	**99**	774	**873**
County 38	0	31	16	12	23	16	0	**98**	777	**875**
County 39	3	30	12	15	32	48	4	**144**	734	**878**
County 40	0	25	34	18	42	32	4	**155**	726	**881**
County 41	6	20	32	3	32	12	0	**105**	807	**912**
County 42	6	24	29	12	29	20	3	**123**	799	**922**
County 43	6	12	0	3	14	44	0	**79**	846	**925**
County 44	6	22	16	16	24	25	0	**109**	817	**926**

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County	Survey Categories							Total Survey Points	Risk-Related Points	Final Score
	Introduction	Flexibility	Sustainability	Security	Survivability	Interoperability	Desirables			
County 45	6	25	16	6	34	27	3	**117**	812	**929**
County 46	6	15	14	4	40	16	0	**95**	839	**934**
County 47	3	26	12	17	34	69	6	**167**	829	**996**
County 48	0	20	12	23	32	69	3	**159**	882	**1,041**
County 49	6	30	21	9	34	4	4	**108**	941	**1,049**
County 50	3	35	17	13	35	45	7	**155**	896	**1,051**
County 51	0	22	16	12	36	36	1	**123**	1,005	**1,128**
County 52	0	17	42	22	20	48	0	**149**	1,067	**1,216**
County 53	6	41	35	25	27	44	1	**179**	1,101	**1,280**
County 54	3	30	31	30	38	71	1	**204**	1,210	**1,414**
County 55	0	28	31	15	52	83	3	**212**	1,245	**1,457**
County 56	0	32	31	34	54	55	4	**210**	1,329	**1,539**
County 57	0	32	37	23	55	53	3	**203**	1,589	**1,792**
County 58	6	39	42	20	31	53	1	**192**	1,705	**1,897**
Average score	**3**	**22**	**18**	**13**	**28**	**26**	**3**	**112**		
Maximum points possible	**9**	**55**	**60**	**40**	**82**	**92**	**7**	**345**		

Survey Categories

Introduction: Asks whether the entity has a primary and alternate EOC and their locations.

Flexibility: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to scale operations and adapt operational space to the all-hazards event.

Sustainability: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to support operations for extended durations without interruption.

Security: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to guard against potential risks and protect operations from the unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information.

Survivability: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to sustain the effects of a realized risk and continue operations from the EOC or fully capable alternate location.

Interoperability: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to share common principles of operations and exchange routine and time-sensitive information with local jurisdictions, state level EOCs, and FEMA's network of operation centers.

Desirables: Consists of questions related to elements not absolutely necessary to effectively manage an emergency but would, nevertheless, increase an EOC's capacity, such as close proximity to an airport or having a helicopter landing pad.

Source: The Governor's Office of Emergency Services' March/April 2003 survey of county EOCs.

TABLE A.2

Survey Results for Alternate Emergency Operation Centers

	Survey Categories							Total Survey Points	Risk-Related Points	Final Score
County	Introduction	Flexibility	Sustainability	Security	Survivability	Interoperability	Desirables			
County 1	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,476	**1,826**
County 2	0	11	15	4	24	0	4	**58**	619	**677**
County 3	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,337	**1,687**
County 4	6	10	10	12	20	24	3	**85**	376	**461**
County 5	6	14	12	4	14	20	3	**73**	392	**465**
County 6	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	624	**974**
County 7	0	15	0	7	16	4	0	**42**	338	**380**
County 8	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,808	**2,158**
County 9	3	55	42	38	72	91	7	**308**	1,223	**1,531**
County 10	0	34	29	3	26	16	4	**112**	692	**804**
County 11	6	16	27	11	14	13	3	**90**	425	**515**
County 12	6	48	32	35	53	77	7	**258**	674	**932**
County 13	3	27	24	34	53	24	1	**166**	1,106	**1,272**
County 14	6	16	20	17	43	29	3	**134**	709	**843**
County 15	3	35	7	15	23	28	3	**114**	468	**582**
County 16	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,695	**2,045**
County 17	0	31	25	33	33	59	6	**187**	796	**983**
County 18	0	12	8	2	32	20	0	**74**	635	**709**
County 19	0	15	23	4	45	32	3	**122**	739	**861**
County 20	6	24	22	27	35	43	0	**157**	895	**1,052**
County 21	6	22	4	11	19	28	4	**94**	651	**745**
County 22	3	20	16	13	36	48	3	**139**	773	**912**
County 23	6	35	17	28	46	43	0	**175**	1,337	**1,512**
County 24	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,365	**2,715**
County 25	3	38	27	36	45	35	6	**190**	1,439	**1,629**
County 26	3	14	17	17	24	29	6	**110**	630	**740**
County 27	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,577	**1,927**
County 28	3	26	16	8	44	35	7	**139**	644	**783**
County 29	0	22	33	35	48	32	3	**173**	1,179	**1,352**
County 30	6	25	19	8	31	43	4	**136**	1,065	**1,201**
County 31	0	18	17	4	30	5	3	**77**	655	**732**
County 32	3	9	16	1	22	8	0	**59**	421	**480**
County 33	0	20	4	25	16	28	4	**97**	620	**717**
County 34	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,171	**2,521**
County 35	6	28	10	16	56	28	3	**147**	1,510	**1,657**
County 36	3	22	14	17	22	33	3	**114**	763	**877**
County 37	0	32	32	30	20	39	4	**157**	1,229	**1,386**
County 38	6	37	20	24	41	16	1	**145**	1,149	**1,294**
County 39	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,784	**2,134**
County 40	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,639	**1,989**
County 41	6	16	32	3	30	8	0	**95**	730	**825**
County 42	6	27	25	24	35	20	4	**141**	915	**1,056**
County 43	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	3,748	**4,098**
County 44	6	26	16	22	24	45	0	**139**	1,043	**1,182**

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County	Survey Categories							Total Survey Points	Risk-Related Points	Final Score
	Introduction	Flexibility	Sustainability	Security	Survivability	Interoperability	Desirables			
County 45	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,429	**2,779**
County 46	6	23	29	3	38	8	0	**107**	944	**1,051**
County 47	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	1,739	**2,089**
County 48	0	25	15	15	28	69	3	**155**	861	**1,016**
County 49	6	43	33	15	50	4	3	**154**	1,343	**1,497**
County 50	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,024	**2,374**
County 51	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,872	**3,222**
County 52	0	32	42	22	24	72	3	**195**	1,396	**1,591**
County 53	6	34	18	25	21	56	1	**161**	987	**1,148**
County 54	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,076	**2,426**
County 55	3	41	31	31	48	68	3	**225**	1,321	**1,546**
County 56	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,215	**2,565**
County 57	350	0	0	0	0	0	0	**350**	2,740	**3,090**
County 58	6	39	42	24	39	53	1	**204**	1,811	**2,015**
Average score*	**3**	**26**	**21**	**18**	**34**	**33**	**3**	**138**		
Maximum points possible†	**9**	**55**	**60**	**40**	**82**	**92**	**7**	**345**		

Survey Categories

Introduction: Asks whether the entity has a primary and alternate EOC and their locations.

Flexibility: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to scale operations and adapt operational space to the all-hazards event.

Sustainability: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to support operations for extended durations without interruption.

Security: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to guard against potential risks and protect operations from the unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information.

Survivability: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to sustain the effects of a realized risk and continue operations from the EOC or fully capable alternate location.

Interoperability: Consists of questions related to an EOC's ability to share common principles of operations and exchange routine and time-sensitive information with local jurisdictions, state level EOCs, and FEMA's network of operation centers.

Desirables: Consists of questions related to elements not absolutely necessary to effectively manage an emergency but would, nevertheless, increase an EOC's capacity, such as close proximity to an airport or having a helicopter landing pad.

Source: The Governor's Office of Emergency Services' March/April 2003 survey of county EOCs.

***** Because 18 counties do not have an alternate EOC, we did not include them in the calculation of average score.

† The maximum points possible row is based on the existence of an alternative EOC. If an alternate EOC does not exist, the maximum points possible under the "Introduction" and "Total Survey Points" categories is 350 points.

Agency's comments provided as text only.

Office of Homeland Security
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

July 22, 2003

Elaine M. Howle
California State Auditor
Bureau of State Audits
555 Capitol Mall, Suite 300
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Howle:

Enclosed are the responses to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, No. 2002-113 for both the Offices of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. We have included this letter and the responses in the enclosed diskette.

Thank you for your time in this matter. Should you have any further questions or need any additional information, please contact Michael Levy, Deputy Director, at (916) 324-8908.

Sincerely,

(Signed by: George Vinson)

GEORGE VINSON
Director

Enclosure

Suggested Responses to BSA Audit 2002-113:

The Governor's Office of Homeland Security (OHS) and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) agree with each of the Bureau of State Audits' (BSA) recommendations under Audit No. 2002-113. We would like to provide these responses to the following items in particular:

Chapter 1 Responses

OES Has Not Established a Formal Process to Regularly Evaluate and Update the State Emergency Plan

OES and OHS understand and appreciate the benefit of a formal schedule and process for reviewing and updating emergency plans to ensure that they are current, and both agencies are now drafting up such a process. Nonetheless, in addition to such a formal process, OES has had many informal opportunities in the last few years—perhaps more than if we had relied solely on a formal schedule—to test our plans for responding to disasters and emergencies. In addition to an informal review in March and other updates, OES, as mentioned later in this audit report, has activated its State Operations Center 48 times in the last several years. At the conclusion of those activations, OES has informally reviewed its plans to determine whether that activation required revisions.

Following Emergencies, OES Is Not Consistently Preparing After Action Reports To Review Its And Local Governments' Emergency Response Efforts

OES acknowledges that current law requires an after action report following a Governor's State of Emergency proclamation and will implement appropriate controls to achieve the benefits of after action reporting. OES will also pursue other methods and procedures to increase local government participation and ensure that all stakeholders receive maximum benefit from this process.

Inaccurate and Missing Data in RIMS Prevents OES From Evaluating How Well It Coordinates Resources During Emergencies

OES does not dispute that the RIMS form could be used to indicate the actual approval and resource arrival times for all missions, or that this data might prove helpful. However, it is unclear whether the benefits gained from capturing this information on resource approval and arrival in the RIMS form would be outweighed by the administrative burden this task would entail. As such, during the next six months OES will work with its stakeholders to explore options for capturing this same information through a less-burdensome means, including any necessary systematic or procedural changes.

OES Needs to Ensure Key Staff Are Properly Trained

OES agrees that a comprehensive training program should be developed and that critical staff training requirements should be identified. OES has in fact already taken steps to develop such a program agency-wide, including an assessment of training needs. Training Coordinator staff representing all OES branches have met and developed the draft core competencies, which form the basis of the needs assessment. The core competencies will be based on knowledge and skills necessary to carry out basic emergency management functions (i.e., staff positions in the REOC or SOC) as well as work in the OES office environment (e.g., knowledge of Lotus Notes, understanding what various OES branches do). A draft agency-wide training program has already been provided to OES Branch Managers for their input and is in the process of being forwarded to the OES Director for his approval. We anticipate finalizing this program by the end of December, 2003 with the intent of implementing it January 1, 2004.

Individual managers and supervisors will supplement this training program with technical training requirements specific to the individual employee/branch needs. Individual supervisors will be required to review their staff's training records against the core competencies included in the agency-wide program, identify shortfalls, and address remediation of the shortfalls in future individual training plans.

Clarification of the Roles and Responsibilities Of OHS and OES Would Be Beneficial

Since September 11, 2001, many states including California have created Offices of Homeland Security to better address the new reality of responding to the threat of terrorism. While there is some overlap between responding to acts of terrorism and responding to natural disasters, there is still a significant prevention component to man-made disasters that is not as present when it comes to responding to fires, floods and earthquakes. Thus, to better marry the state's response and recovery activities with a terrorism prevention component, as well as coordinate all first responders under one agency, Governor Davis created the Office of Homeland Security. In so doing, the Governor ordered the directors of OES and OCJP to report through OHS for all purposes, not just for terrorism-related purposes. While this relationship may ultimately be the subject of a more formal Governors' Reorganization Plan, the oversight role of OHS with respect to OES and OCJP requires no clarification.

Chapter 2 Responses

Aging and Obsolete equipment May Impact OES's Future Ability to Respond to Emergencies

OES agrees that acquiring and maintaining emergency response and communication equipment is a high priority. OES will continue to work with the Office of Homeland Security and the Department of Finance to seek and obtain funding where possible.

cc: Members of the Legislature
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Milton Marks Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy
Department of Finance
Attorney General
State Controller
State Treasurer
Legislative Analyst
Senate Office of Research
California Research Bureau
Capitol Press