



**2010-2011  
Madera County Grand Jury  
Final Report  
Fire Safety and Protection in Madera County  
Fire Marshall**

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**Introduction:**

The Grand Jury determined the functions of the Madera County Fire Marshall (Marshall) are integral to fire safety and protection.

The Marshall has been in her current position for approximately one year. She is a Madera County employee responsible for fire prevention, safety, and related issues, including fire inspections. She works under the Resource Management Agency (RMA).

**Findings:**

The Grand Jury found the Marshall to be well qualified and motivated. The Marshall is an integral part of the overall county emergency/medical/health services and fire defense.

The Grand Jury found that the Marshall works closely with CAL FIRE Battalion chiefs and the Division Chief. In an effort to build a cohesive body they meet monthly.

The Grand Jury found that the Marshall's duties include annual school inspections. Currently, only two public schools are being inspected, in violation of State mandate. They are the schools situated within the Bonadelle Fire Station district. The Captain of this district has taken on the responsibility to conduct annual inspections; all other schools within the city and county are not being inspected.

The Grand Jury found that while permit tracking has increased, staffing decreased by 50% over the same period.

The Grand Jury found that inspections are not aggressive because of economic conditions and/or reduced staffing levels. Inspections are made in response to complaints.

The Grand Jury found that inspections are performed on a fee-for-service basis which fall 60-65% short of the actual costs of providing the service. Many of the services do not have an adopted fee, and as such the costs are not recovered.

The Grand Jury found that the most difficult challenges the Marshall has to deal with are budget and staffing needs. Under-staffing may delay response to telephone calls and/or messages and inspections. Budget cuts result in the Marshall personally conducting inspections. Inspections performed in eastern Madera County are scheduled on specific days to reduce travel time.

**Conclusions:**

The Grand Jury concludes that the State of California has developed and issued mandates for various levels of State, City, and County governments. While the Marshall is accomplishing the majority of such mandated inspections, the annual school inspections are not being carried out. Omission is placing the citizens and school children of the County at risk.

The Grand Jury concludes that current service fees are inadequate to cover the cost of the services.

**Recommendations:**

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors review the Marshall's current staffing needs.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors review all current inspection service fees and adjust them to more accurately reflect actual costs.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors ensures compliance with State mandates.

**Respondent:** Written response required pursuant to PC933(c)

Madera County Board of Supervisors  
200 West Fourth Street  
Madera, CA 93637

**Respondents: Response Optional**

Resource Management Agency  
2037 West Cleveland Avenue  
Madera, CA 93637

Madera County Fire Marshall  
2037 West Cleveland Avenue  
Madera, CA 93637