

COUNTY OF SONOMA
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575 ADMINISTRATION DRIVE, RM. 100A
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95403

(707) 565-2241
FAX (707) 565-3778



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May 10, 2018

Howard Backer, MD
Director, California Emergency Medical Services Authority
10901 Gold Center Drive Suite 400
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Dear Dr. Backer:

The fires in Northern California during October, apart from being the most devastating in California history, have impacted our county in an almost inconceivable variety of ways. In the past 6 months, we have learned a great deal about how extensive those impacts have been.

One of these impacts has been to our Local Emergency Medical Services Agency (Coastal Valleys EMSA) work with the first responder and emergency medical service providers in the stakeholder outreach for continuous quality improvement, particularly with respect to ambulance services that are provided under an Exclusive Operating Area agreement serving 240,000 in residents in the core of the county. Consistent with long established practice and timed for completion in order to conduct the next competitive procurement for these services, the kick-off for that process was scheduled for October 10, 2017.

As you can imagine, the Coastal Valleys staff and all the stakeholders of the EMS system in the County were deeply engaged at that moment in response to the devastating fires in the county. Not only did this work disrupt the short term schedule of the effort, it affected many of the stakeholder's personally thorough loss of homes and the need to support recovery efforts for themselves and thousands of others in the community. This delayed the effort significantly, to the point where it was only possible to begin again in February 2018.

But in addition to the four month delay, the fires not only tested the emergency response capabilities of the system but provided a stark reminder that the events and system must be rigorously reviewed and examined for the lessons learned so that the system can be better prepared for future emergencies. We cannot ignore the need to engage in a more thorough process than was originally envisioned. The system's stakeholders and the public we serve cannot have less.

Yet, this puts Coastal Valleys EMSA in a difficult position, for there simply isn't enough time in order to complete the comprehensive stakeholder process and incorporate improvements into the next competitive procurement within the current term of the agreement and provide for enough time to transition safely to the next ambulance provider after the procurement. The risk of returning to

the dangerous practice of ambulance organizations fighting each other for patients in the area or degradation of medical and health outcomes with the loss of ability to provide for the coordinated delivery of services in an environment characterized by daily ambulance competition is too great to proceed without a fully functioning Exclusive Operating Area agreement in place.

The Board of Supervisors has learned of this challenge facing Coastal Valleys and of the critical role the California Emergency Medical Services Authority has in approving any extension of exclusive operating area agreements under the annual EMS plans for our County. We unanimously and strongly urge you to support Coastal Valley's request for a one year extension dated May 7, 2018 so that they can continue their comprehensive stakeholder engagement process and competitive procurement for the next Exclusive Operating Area ambulance services agreement.

Sincerely,



JAMES GORE, Chair
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

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