



FOLLOW-UP ON RESPONSES TO THE 2019-2020 SAN MATEO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY RANSOMWARE REPORT

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BACKGROUND

California law¹ requires the Civil Grand Jury to “submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year.” Responses and any comments from the governing body, elected officer, or agency head to which such findings and recommendations are directed must be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court within the period of time specified in that law.² Governing bodies of public agencies are required to respond no later than 90 days after the Grand Jury submits a final report, elected county officers and agency heads no later than 60 days. Grand Jury reports and the responses from prior years can be reviewed on the following website: http://www.sanmateocourt.org/court_divisions/grand_jury.

Each year, the Grand Jury reviews the responses and comments submitted with respect to recommendations issued by the prior year’s Grand Jury in light of California Penal Code Section 933.05(b). That code section provides that each responding agency head, county officer, or governing body *shall provide one of only four possible responses* – namely, that the recommendation:

1. Has been implemented, with a summary of the action taken;
2. Will be implemented, with a timetable for the implementation;
3. Requires further analysis, with an explanation and a timeframe for the response of up to six months from the release of the report;
4. Will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation for that response.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

The 2019-20 Grand Jury issued seven investigative reports that included recommendations to county, local or district agencies. Last year, the 2020-21 Grand Jury issued a report that reviewed the agencies’ formal responses to those investigative reports.³ It also recommended that the Grand Jury follow up on some of the responses.

¹ Penal Code Section 933(a).

² Penal Code Section 933(c).

³ https://www.sanmateocourt.org/documents/grand_jury/2020/Continuity%202019-20%20GJ%20Reports.pdf

This year, the Grand Jury selected the responses to one investigative report issued by the 2019-20 Grand Jury for further follow-up. That report, entitled “Ransomware: It Is Not Enough to Think You Are Protected” (referred to below as the “Ransomware Report”) recommended that the governing bodies of agencies in San Mateo County undertake efforts to protect against ransomware attacks. An aggregate of 68 agencies (20 cities, 25 school districts, 22 special districts, and the County) were asked to respond to enumerated recommendations. Many agencies indicated that action on the recommendation was expected in the future.

This year, the 2021-22 Grand Jury submitted letters to the agencies that responded to the Ransomware Report and were flagged for follow-up. The Ransomware Report’s recommendations and each agency’s updated responses to those recommendations are spelled out in Appendix A.

This report is designed to help the public evaluate whether and to what extent agencies have responded to recommendations of the Grand Jury.

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP RESPONSES TO THE 2019-20 SAN MATEO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY RANSOMWARE REPORT

***“Ransomware: It Is Not Enough to Think You Are Protected”
A Follow-up on 2019-20 Grand Jury Report***

The Grand Jury recommends that each governing body undertake its own confidential effort to protect against Ransomware attacks. Specifically:

R1. Each of the governmental entities in San Mateo County with an IT department or IT function (whether in-house, handled by another government unit or outsourced to a private enterprise) as listed in Appendix F, should by November 30, 2020, make a request for a report from their IT organization that addresses the concerns identified in the report, specifically:

1. System Security (Firewalls, Anti-malware/Antivirus software, use of subnets, strong password policies, updating/patching regularly)
2. Backup & Recovery (In the event of an attack, can you shut down your system quickly? What is being backed up, how it is being backed up, when are backups run, and where are the backups being stored? Have backups been tested? Can you fully restore a Server from a backup?)
3. Prevention (turning on email filtering, setting up message rules to warn users, providing employee training on phishing and providing a reporting system to flag suspect content)

R2. These confidential internal reports should be provided to the governing body by June 30, 2021. This report should describe what actions have already been taken and which will be given timely consideration for future enhancements to the existing cybersecurity plan.

RESPONDING AGENCY	APPLICABLE RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW-UP RESPONSES
City of Atherton	R2	Implemented.
City of Belmont	R1	Implemented.
City of Brisbane	R1	Implemented.
	R2	Implemented.
Town of Colma	R2	Implemented.
City of Daly City	R2	Implemented.
City of East Palo Alto	R1	Will implement by December 31, 2022.
	R2	Will implement by December 31, 2022.
City of Foster City	R2	Implemented.
Town of Hillsborough	R2	Implemented.
City of Menlo Park	R2	Implemented.

RESPONDING AGENCY	APPLICABLE RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW-UP RESPONSES
City of Millbrae	R2	Implemented.
City of Pacifica	R2	Implemented.
Town of Portola Valley	R2	Implemented.
City of Redwood City	R2	Implemented.
City of San Bruno	R2	Implemented.
City of San Carlos	R2	Implemented.
City of San Mateo	R2	Implemented.
City of South San Francisco	R2	Implemented.
County of San Mateo, County Manager	R1	Implemented.
	R2	No response.
Bayshore Elementary School District	R2	Implemented.
Belmont-Redwood Shores School District	R2	Implemented.
Brisbane School District	R2	Implemented.
Burlingame School District	R2	Implemented.
Cabrillo Unified School District	R2	Implemented.
Hillsborough City School District	R2	Implemented.
Jefferson Elementary School District	R2	Implemented.
Jefferson Union High School District	R2	Implemented.
La Honda-Pescadero USD	R2	Implemented.
Las Lomitas Elementary School District	R2	Implemented.
Menlo Park City School District	R2	Implemented.
Millbrae School District	R1	Implemented.
Pacifica School District	R2	Implemented.
Portola Valley School District	R2	Implemented.
Ravenswood City School District	R2	Implemented.
San Bruno School District	R2	No response.
San Carlos School District	R2	Implemented.
San Mateo-Foster City School District	R2	Implemented.
San Mateo Union High School District	R2	Implemented.
Sequoia Union High School District	R2	Implemented.
San Mateo County Community College District	R1	Implemented.
	R2	Implemented.
San Mateo County Office of Education	R2	Implemented.
South San Francisco Unified School District	R2	Implemented.
Woodside School District	R2	Implemented.
Broadmoor Police District	R2	Implemented.
Coastside County Water District	R2	Implemented.
Colma Fire Protection District	R1	Implemented.
	R2	Implemented.

RESPONDING AGENCY	APPLICABLE RECOMMENDATION	FOLLOW-UP RESPONSES
East Palo Alto Sanitary District	R1	Implemented.
	R2	Will implement by July 31, 2022.
Granada Community Services District	R1	Implemented.
	R2	Implemented.
Highlands Recreation District	R2	Implemented.
Ladera Recreation District	R2	Implemented.
Menlo Park Fire Protection District	R2	Will implement by August 31, 2021.
Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District	R2	Implemented.
Mid-Peninsula Water District	R2	Implemented.
Montara Water and Sanitary District	R1	Implemented.
	R2	Implemented.
North Coast County Water District	R2	Implemented.
San Mateo County Harbor District	R2	Implemented.
San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District	R2	Implemented.
West Bay Sanitary District	R2	Implemented.
Westborough Water District	R2	Implemented.
Woodside Fire Protection District	R2	Implemented.
Town of Woodside	R2	Implemented.
Coastside Fire Protection District	R2	Implemented.