

Yolo County Commission on Aging & Adult Services (YCCA&AS) Revised & New Recommendations on Emergency Preparedness to Yolo County Board of Supervisors

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 1: It is recommended that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors direct staff to: a) develop a protocol to identify individuals in the unincorporated areas of the county with access and functional needs who do not use county services (and are willing to be identified); b) specify a mechanism by which they can provide their contact information to OES; c) designate locations to house updated contact information such as rural fire departments; and d) establish a public outreach program to make citizens aware of the protocol, mechanism, and location where the information is housed.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 2: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to develop specialized assisted living protocols, responses and training, that will foster greater cooperation and collaboration between assisted living facilities and county emergency services, as well as strict adherence to public health regulations/policies/protocols.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 3: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct county staff to ensure all educational efforts from the county include instruction to residents with special needs on what to do in a power outage, including: information about personal power generators; the locations of emergency shelters with electricity; ready.gov, CalOES.ca.gov and PG&E program information placed on city and county websites; and instruction on how to make an individual personal plan. The county should also assure this information is available through Yolo 211 and OES. In the event of a planned or unplanned power outage: emergency alert notifications must explicitly include where people with medical needs can go to obtain power locally; and such facilities must be accessible to persons with access and functional needs.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 4: It is recommended the Board of Supervisors direct staff to work with subject matter experts to develop Alzheimer's/dementia training and provide it to EMT, Fire personnel and the Sheriff's Office as soon as practicable.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 5: It is recommended the Board of Supervisors direct staff, as part of the upcoming County website redesign, to improve the accessibility and navigability of the county website so that it gives information about emergency preparedness, and ensures it also displays current emergency situation updates, including information on where persons with special medical needs for power can go during a power outage.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 6: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to leverage partnerships to create a rural Community Emergency Response

Team (CERT) assigned to a rural fire protection district best situated to recruit volunteers and provide training in basic disaster and medical response skills.

RECOMMENDATION 7: If funds are identified, it is recommended that the Board of Supervisors ensure In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) consumers are prioritized as recipients for free “go kits.”

RECOMMENDATION 8: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors, in consultation with Yolo County OES, provide the support for appropriate legislation to increase county OES budgets.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 9: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors use county manager/CAO and county/city 2x2 meetings to coordinate and share information about emergency preparedness; and direct staff to develop a system to ensure someone from OES is in attendance when the topic of emergency preparedness is on the agenda of any of these meetings.

NEW RECOMMENDATION 10: It is recommended that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors direct staff to increase the use of tools available to them, especially more information on YoloAlert, to communicate information about a pending or existing emergency or planned power outages in a timely fashion to everyone in the county.

NEW RECOMMENDATION 11: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to build and maintain a more robust infectious disease team with an identifiable county contact, that the public can communicate with, that will carry out their mandate to ensure that emergency protocols, i.e. like testing and contact tracing, identification, notification, are followed in long term care facilities (skilled nursing and assisted living facilities) in regard to any resident, staff member, vendor or visitor who has an infectious disease.

NEW RECOMMENDATION 12: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff, during an infectious outbreak, to include in their education efforts, an explanation why visitors to a long term care facility have to follow the required protocols limiting family visitation for the safety and health of long term care residents. The county explanations should suggest alternatives if permitted/available, e.g. phone calls, virtual visits via tablets or computer, social distancing while sitting on an outdoor patio, visits through an outside window. The county can request that written notification be placed in a prevalent location both inside and outside the affected building where a person would normally enter, as to the specific methods allowed as alternatives to in-person visitation.

NEW RECOMMENDATION 13: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors have a policy in place whether to release the name of a skilled nursing facility or assisted living facility that is a “hot spot” of cases during an infectious outbreak.

DISCUSSION

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 1:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to implement a county voluntary Special Needs Alert Program (SNAP), to identify those individuals living in the unincorporated areas of the county with access and functional needs who will need assistance in an emergency. This program should include education and outreach to ensure citizens are aware of the program's existence.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff has determined that SNAP is not a viable option for the County in that it requires manual input of data, and a level of maintenance that we are not currently staffed for. The County uses Everbridge (Yolo Alert) for emergency communication with residents in the cities and unincorporated communities. Data on individuals with access and functional needs can be added to Everbridge, however Placer and Sacramento County will need to agree to adding this option since the County shares a contract with them.

Staff will work on getting current data into GIS (Geographic Information System) for added messaging purposes. Registration for Yolo Alert is available on the County Office of Emergency Services (OES) webpage, and is part of emergency preparedness outreach throughout the County. Staff can provide an annual report of participation to aid in marketing Yolo Alert.

DISCUSSION & REVISED RECOMMENDATION 1:

There is a cohort of individuals in the unincorporated area of the county who have access and functional needs but do not tap into county services. It is crucial that these people be included in county emergency planning and not be omitted or forgotten. Whether they are encompassed through a formal SNAP list or some other apparatus is immaterial. It is also possible that local fire departments know who these folks are. We are more than happy to leave the details up to county staff to determine, as they have the expertise to know best how to go about involving these people in county emergency planning.

It is recommended that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors direct staff to: a) develop a protocol to identify individuals in the unincorporated areas of the county with access and functional needs who do not use county services (and are willing to be identified); b) specify a mechanism by which they can provide their contact information to OES; c) designate locations to house updated contact information such as rural fire departments; and d) establish a public outreach program to make citizens aware of the protocol, mechanism, and location where the information is housed.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 2: It is recommended that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors require an annual report indicating which licensed continuing care facilities are participating or not participating in Healthcare Preparedness Coalition regular meetings and tabletop exercises. To incentivize attendance, the Board of Supervisors should direct county staff to: investigate the possibility of instituting a business license requirement to attend meetings/tabletop exercises; and/or establish a gold star program to reward those who attend; and/or explore other alternatives. The Yolo County Board of Supervisors should also direct staff to develop a plan to assist the state in implementation of AB 3098 in Yolo County (see background below for reference).

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff has found that participation by licensed board and care facilities in the Healthcare Preparedness Coalition (“Coalition”) is of value since these facilities tend to be better informed and have better communication with the County. Staff agrees with compiling a yearly list of facilities that are participating, or are “in good standing” with the Coalition. Incentives are most likely not needed since participation in the Coalition has increased in recent years despite no longer offering funding incentives.

Staff does not recommend adding a business license condition as licenses are ministerial and therefore not amenable to additional requirements and would only affect the facilities in the unincorporated County, of which there are none currently.

DISCUSSION & REVISED RECOMMENDATION 2:

It has become clear during the COVID pandemic that assisted living facilities must be an integral part of emergency planning, since they house the frail elderly, a very vulnerable population in close proximity to each other. But because assisted living is a social services model it needs to be treated differently than skilled nursing. Healthcare Preparedness Coalition meetings may or may not be the optimum place for assisted living facilities to obtain assistance with their needs and training, because it is designed specifically for healthcare facilities.

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to develop specialized assisted living protocols, responses and training, that will foster greater cooperation and collaboration between assisted living facilities and county emergency services.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 3: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct county staff to ensure all educational efforts from the county include instruction to residents with special needs on what to do in a power outage, including: information about personal power generators; the locations of emergency shelters with electricity; ready.gov and CalOES.ca.gov information placed on city and county websites; and instruction on how to make an individual personal plan. The county should also assure this information is available through Yolo 211 and

OES. In the event of a planned or unplanned power outage: emergency alert notifications must explicitly include where people with medical needs can go to obtain power locally; and such facilities must be accessible to persons with access and functional needs.

STAFF RESPONSE: The County's Emergency Public Information Plan is in place to assist with the logistics of informing the community during emergencies. Staff will continue to provide important and up to date information on planning for emergencies and information during an emergency to Yolo 211. This information includes locations of evacuation centers, where to go to get power, where to go if you have medical needs etc. Staff recommends educational efforts be done proactively to ensure residents are informed on personal emergency preparedness tactics before an emergency event including awareness of the role of community in an emergency.

DISCUSSION & REVISED RECOMMENDATION 3:

There is anecdotal evidence that information about where locations are that will provide power in an emergency are not finding their way to YoloAlerts. It has also been noticed that YoloAlerts are few and far between whereas SolanoAlerts are much more profuse and frequent. Those with access and functional needs require more lead time to prepare for an emergency, so more alerts rather than less would be helpful.

Community Resource Centers set up by PG&E have not been available for medically necessary power and are not open after business hours. However, there is a new program through PG&E during a public safety power shutoff, for those with disabilities or older adults, that will provide (after signing up): portable backup power, emergency preparedness assistance, accessible transportation, hotel vouchers and food stipends, and medical baseline application assistance. Eligibility for this program depends on income level and medical need.

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct county staff to ensure all educational efforts from the county include instruction to residents with special needs on what to do in a power outage, including: information about personal power generators; the locations of emergency shelters with electricity; ready.gov, CalOES.ca.gov and PG&E program information placed on city and county websites; and instruction on how to make an individual personal plan. The county should also assure this information is available through Yolo 211 and OES. In the event of a planned or unplanned power outage: emergency alert notifications must explicitly include where people with medical needs can go to obtain power locally; and such facilities must be accessible to persons with access and functional needs.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 4:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct county staff to develop and make mandatory Alzheimer's Disease/dementia training for law enforcement/fire/EMS departments in the unincorporated areas of the county, and encourage the incorporated cities to do the same.

STAFF RESPONSE: California Assembly Bill 453 was passed in 2019 and requires dementia-specific training for Medical First Responders (Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)/Fire). Development of training content is done at the State level and has not yet been produced. Staff recommends that the County work with subject matter experts to develop this training and provide, but not require it, for EMT and Fire personnel. Fire personnel are required to complete continuing education credits and this training could help fulfill that. Staff will work with the Sheriff's Office to determine training for law enforcement.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 4: It is recommended the Board of Supervisors direct staff to work with subject matter experts to develop Alzheimer's/dementia training and provide it to EMT, Fire personnel and the Sheriff's Office as soon as practical.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 5: It is recommended the Board of Supervisors direct staff to improve the accessibility and navigability of the county website so that it gives information about emergency preparedness, and ensures it also displays current emergency situation updates, including information on where persons with special medical needs for power can go during a power outage.

STAFF RESPONSE: The improvements mentioned in this recommendation will be included as part of the upcoming County website redesign. There will be a homepage with bigger font and line spacing, as well as a highlight section that can include emergency notifications when necessary and a dedicated special needs page.

RECOMMENDATION 5: It is recommended the Board of Supervisors direct staff, as part of the upcoming County website redesign, to improve the accessibility and navigability of the county website so that it gives information about emergency preparedness, and ensures it also displays current emergency situation updates, including information on where persons with special medical needs for power can go during a power outage.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 6: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to work with local jurisdictions to coordinate and expand volunteers numbers, in particular expanding Community Response Emergency Teams (CERTs).

STAFF RESPONSE: CERTs must be overseen by an agency that has the resources to provide training and management. Staff recommends that we leverage our partnerships to create a rural CERT that can be assigned to a rural fire protection district. A fire protection district is best situated to recruit volunteers and provide training in basic disaster and medical response skills.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION 6: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to leverage partnerships to create a rural Community Response Emergency

Team (CERT) assigned to a rural fire protection district best situated to recruit volunteers and provide training in basic disaster and medical response skills.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 7: If funds are identified, it is recommended that the Board of Supervisors ensure IHSS consumers are prioritized as recipients for free “go kits.”

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff will work to identify funds that can be used to provide IHSS consumers with a "go-kit" bag and a list of “go kit” items they can purchase to fit their unique needs. Staff also recommends supporting legislation that allows IHSS Providers to be paid for time spent purchasing supplies for “go kits”.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION 7:

It is our understanding that IHSS, Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance, and/or the Disaster Preparedness Subcommittee can work to identify a grant(s) for “go” kits, then OES will actually write the grant. Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance, as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, will likely be the grant recipient and administrator. The Disaster Preparedness Subcommittee wishes to participate with IHSS in determining the grant criteria when applying for the grant. There is at least one member of the Disaster Preparedness Subcommittee who is a member of the IHSS Advisory Committee.

If funds are identified, it is recommended that the Board of Supervisors ensure In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) consumers are prioritized as recipients for free “go kits.”

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 8: Due to current budget constraints, it is recommended that the Board of Supervisors, in consultation with Yolo County OES, provide the support for appropriate legislation to increase county OES budgets.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff concurs that additional state resources are necessary to support OES. The County continues to monitor and evaluate relevant legislation, including AB 291.

RECOMMENDATION 8: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors, in consultation with Yolo County OES, provide the support for appropriate legislation to increase county OES budgets.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION 9: It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors use county manager/CAO and county/city 2x2 meetings to coordinate and share information about emergency preparedness.

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff has found that emergency preparedness information is shared at the monthly CAO and City Manager meetings, but could be strengthened at the 2x2 level (though some 2x2 meetings happen infrequently).

DISCUSSION & REVISED RECOMMENDATION 9:

There is anecdotal evidence that when emergency preparedness has been on the agenda of a 2x2 meeting, someone from OES did not attend. It is critical that a representative from OES be at any meeting where emergency preparedness is discussed, as s/he has the necessary expertise to have an informed discussion.

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors use county manager/CAO and county/city 2x2 meetings to coordinate and share information about emergency preparedness; and direct staff to develop a system to ensure someone from OES is in attendance when the topic of emergency preparedness is on the agenda of any of these meetings.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION 10:

There is evidence that information about where locations are that will provide power in an emergency are not finding their way to YoloAlerts. It has also been noticed that YoloAlerts are few and far between whereas SolanoAlerts are much more profuse and frequent. Those with access and functional needs require more lead time to prepare for an emergency, so more alerts rather than less would be helpful. The necessary information is not getting to the public.

It is recommended that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors direct staff to increase the use of tools available to them, especially more information on YoloAlert, to communicate information about a pending or existing emergency or planned power outages in a timely fashion to everyone in the county.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION 11:

It has become obvious during this COVID pandemic that long-term facilities (skilled nursing and assisted living facilities) house a very vulnerable population in close proximity to each other, the frail elderly. Therefore it is crucial that testing and contact tracing take place religiously in these facilities in regard to any resident, staff member, vendor or visitor who has an infectious disease. And staff needs to be segregated in such a way that they are assigned as few residents as possible to care for, to prevent cross contamination of other residents. This pandemic has underscored the importance and necessity of prioritizing public health and the critical work they do in carrying out the necessary and required emergency protocols.

Because the county no longer has a dedicated public health department, there is an inadequate system in place to address a major public health issue or to implement ongoing prevention strategies. This systemic problem manifested itself when all effected personnel were not notified of possible exposure to a person with a positive COVID test in assisting living facilities. There is also anecdotal evidence that identification, notification, testing and contact tracing were not instituted soon enough and may still be insufficient. Additionally the public cannot find the public health department online.

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to build and maintain a more robust infectious disease team with an identifiable county contact, that the public can communicate with, that will carry out their mandate to ensure that emergency protocols, i.e. like testing and contact tracing, identification, notification, are followed in long term care facilities (skilled nursing and assisted living facilities) in regard to any resident, staff member, vendor or visitor who has an infectious disease.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION 12:

Some long term care facilities (skilled nursing and assisted living facilities) have instituted protocols in reference to visitation during infectious outbreaks. Long term care facilities must follow state and county guidelines, but are permitted to be more restrictive. Complaints by community and family members of long term care residents about regulations within a particular long term care facility should be addressed to the facility's director.

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct staff, during an infectious outbreak, to include in their education efforts, an explanation why visitors to a long term care facility have to follow the required protocols limiting family visitation for the safety and health of long term care residents. The county explanations should suggest alternatives if permitted/available, e.g. phone calls, virtual visits via tablets or computer, social distancing while sitting on an outdoor patio, visits through an outside window. The county can request that written notification be placed in a prevalent location both inside and outside the affected building where a person would normally enter, as to the specific methods allowed as alternatives to in-person visitation.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION 13:

During the COVID pandemic, there was a change in county policy about whether to publicly release the name of specific long term care facilities with COVID cases. The initial inclination was to not release the information, but the press obtained and published it. The county should have a specific policy in place to address releasing facility names.

It is recommended the Board of Supervisors have a policy in place whether to release the name of a skilled nursing facility or assisted living facility that is a "hot spot" of cases during an infectious outbreak.