

**2008 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON  
AUTHORITY OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

Per Section 8.4 “Progress Reports” of the Marin Emergency Radio Authority Joint Powers Agreement, “at least annually, a report of the activities and operations of the JPA shall be provided to each of its members before January 1 of each year.” Since joining MERA as Executive Officer in December 2007, MERA has been engaged in Phase II of its mission which is system performance monitoring, evaluation, and maintenance. While certain coverage issues with Motorola remain from Phase I Construction, MERA’s day-to-day operations have been successful and maintenance has been very responsive. Implementation of lesser or no-cost system coverage adjustments and the training of some 2,000 system users by the Marin County Department of Public Works has likewise been very beneficial to MERA’s daily performance.

Given the experience of the January 4 system overload, MERA’s staff and Board must focus on the development, adoption, and promulgation of system operating policies and protocols to assure effective, dependable performance for its members during peak events. Analysis must be undertaken on how the system is being used and how it will be used in the future. Specifically, MERA needs to formally establish system user priority, develop a policy on the number and use of system radios, formally address additional system users and mutual aid partners, develop more stringent radio discipline requirements and enforcement of same, and come to some conclusions on remaining coverage issues and additional frequencies. Beyond formal policies and procedures for MERA’s current system operations, strategic planning should begin to address the future of the system, emerging technology, and MERA and the Bay Area UASI.

Under a single Executive Officer, progress has been made in professionalizing MERA’s core administrative operations. Examples of administrative matters that have been addressed over the last year include:

- \*Development of performance budgets including actuals and projected year-ending
- \*Expanded Board/Committee reports and meeting minutes to better serve as official records
- \*Creation of a records retention schedule and completion of Phase I of the Records Management Project
- \*Comprehensive analysis and monitoring of site leases
- \*Contract performance monitoring and budget oversight
- \*Lease of new office space and meeting facilities
- \*Adoption of a Conflict-of-Interest Code
- \*Analysis of refunding 1999 revenue bonds

- \*Regular participation in Operations Issues Committee meetings to better align system operations with administrative operations

- \*Evaluation of support staff and member communications and services

- \*Introduction of more effective and accurate accounting practices including contract billing analysis and accurate account coding

- \*Updating of Board and Executive Committee lists

- \*Establishment of regular meeting dates/times to maximize participation and assure timely transaction of business

Examples of special projects undertaken in 2008 include MERA's response to the Grand Jury Report and ongoing liaison with the Grand Jury Education Committee and Marin Schools, and the MMWD Forbes Hill Remediation Project. The advantage of having a single Executive Officer permits the flexibility of dealing with new projects and the dedicated attention needed to address same.

Upcoming issues to be addressed by management include a mid-year analysis of bond refunding, revisitation of MERA's role in Wireless Marin, better utilization of the SAP accounting system, preparation of regular financial statements, presentation of MERA as a governmental fund versus enterprise fund, and maintenance of the general ledger consistent with generally accepted accounting practices, including the depreciation of capital assets.

MERA's operational and administrative evolution as described above is typical for a maturing communications system seeking to optimize performance, address the changing needs of its users, and stay on top of new technology. Board and staff commitment is essential to dealing with the leadership and stewardship challenges these tasks will present in the coming weeks and months.