



MARIN COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

1111 LAS GALLINAS AVENUE/P.O. BOX 4925
SAN RAFAEL, CA 94913-4925
marincoe@marinschools.org

MARY JANE BURKE
MARIN COUNTY
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

(415) 472-4110
FAX (415) 491-6625

April 7, 2016

Richard Pearce, President
Marin Emergency Radio Authority
c/o Novato Fire Protection District
95 Rowland Way
Novato, CA 94945

Dear President Pearce,

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us, and for considering our request to include our Marin County School Districts in the Marin Emergency Radio Authority's (MERA) communications plans. To clarify some of the topics we discussed:

- We are seeking approval for school districts and the Marin County Office of Education to purchase 23 MERA Radios (a combination of desktop / console units and hand held radios), which will be utilized by 19 Marin County School Districts and critical Marin County Office of Education locations, and will serve vital school emergency communication links into the foreseeable future.
- The scope of use of these radios will be limited to monthly tests, coordinated drills and exercises with prior approval from the Marin County Office of Emergency Services, and actual local and regional emergencies.
- Current operating costs for the Marin Schools Emergency Radio System is \$911 per month (\$10,932 per year) for tower rental fees at the Big Rock Ridge repeater.

As you know, this request comes at a time when the Marin Schools Emergency Radio Network is no longer fully functioning due to the age of the system components and radios that are no longer supported. Since 1987 our Marin County schools have operated an 800 MgH emergency radio system, originally repurposed from school buses that were no longer in operation. With technical support from the Marin County Radio Shop, monthly tests of the system have been performed during the school year for almost 30 years. Over the past 18 months communications have been deteriorating, with significant work performed at the Big Rock repeater and a recent failure of the base station at the Marin County Office of Education. The system is now unable to link the following school districts to the Marin Schools Emergency Network:

- Bolinas-Stinson Union School District
- Dixie School District
- Kentfield School District
- Laguna Joint School District
- Lagunitas School District
- Larkspur-Corte Madera School District
- Nicasio School District
- Novato Unified School District
- Ross School District
- San Rafael City Schools
- Shoreline Unified School District
- Union Joint School District

The maintenance and operation of a reliable emergency communication system between our schools that will allow us to communicate during a regional emergency when land lines, cell towers and Internet communications may be down remains a critical priority, as we care for some of the most vulnerable in our community. With schools also identified as emergency shelters, evacuation centers and transportation resources - we know that it is vital to address this emergency communications link in the most effective way with our community public safety partners.

The mission of MERA, to effectively and efficiently facilitate critical emergency communication, and the vision to enhance the safety of citizens, are so important to our community. We see inclusion of our school districts in the MERA system as a central and vital step in that mission.

Thank you so much for your consideration, and for the important work that you do to support our public safety.

Sincerely,



THOMAS LOHWASSER

President, Marin Association of Superintendents



MARY JANE BURKE

Marin County Superintendent of Schools

cc: Maureen Cassingham, Executive Officer,
Marin Emergency Radio Authority
Marin County School District Superintendents