

**2002-2003 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY**

**INQUIRY INTO COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS  
DISASTER RECOVERY PLANS**

**Summary**

As a follow-up to audit findings by the Santa Clara County Internal Auditor, the 2002-2003 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted an inquiry into the status of computer information systems disaster recovery plans for cities/towns within Santa Clara County and for selected county agencies/authorities/districts. The Grand Jury determined that not all organizations have prepared written disaster recovery plans and that, when such plans have been prepared, they have not always been tested or updated. A recommendation is made to improve this situation.

**Background**

An audit report issued by the Santa Clara County Internal Auditor in May 2002 indicated shortfalls in disaster recovery plans and physical security for computer information systems of Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System (SCVHHS). In view of this information, the Grand Jury elected to conduct an inquiry to determine if cities/towns within Santa Clara County and selected county agencies/authorities/districts had prepared written disaster recovery plans for computer information systems, and if these plans were regularly tested and updated.

The primary objective of a computer information systems disaster recovery plan is to allow mission-critical systems to survive a disaster and support the re-establishment of normal operations. Our cities/towns and county agencies/authorities/districts provide many essential services to their citizens. The disruption of these services following a disaster could result in significant harm or inconvenience to those who are served.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), the professional association of state/provincial and local finance officers in the United States and

Canada, recommends that every government agency formally establish and regularly update written policies and procedures for minimizing disruptions resulting from computer failures following a disaster. Specifically, the GFOA recommends that such policies and procedures accomplish the following:

- Formally assign disaster recovery coordinators for each agency or department to form a disaster recovery team;
- Require the creation and preservation of backup data;
- Provide detailed instructions for restoring disk files from backup;
- Make provision for the alternative processing of data following a disaster;
- Establish guidelines for the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

In addition, the following actions are recommended by GFOA:

- Copies of the policies and procedures should be kept offsite to assure availability in the event of a disaster;
- The recovery plan should be tested periodically, and immediate action should be taken to remedy any deficiencies identified by that testing;
- Steps should be taken to assure the adequacy of disaster recovery plans for outsourced services.

In order to assess the overall status of computer information systems disaster recovery planning within Santa Clara County, meetings were held with the Director, Business Development and Applications, in the Santa Clara County Information Services Department and with the Chief Information Officer for the Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System. In addition, a survey was sent to:

- Fifteen cities/towns within Santa Clara County;
- Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, Assessor's Office and Department of Correction;
- Valley Transportation Authority;
- Santa Clara Valley Water District.

The survey consisted of seven questions:

1. Does a disaster recovery plan exist?
2. Date it was prepared.
3. Date of last major update.
4. Date of last testing of the plan.
5. Are there any access controls in place? If so, please provide a summary.
6. Are routine access reports generated? If so, what is the frequency of their review?
7. If there is no plan in writing at this time, and if one were to be written, from whom might you seek help?

The results obtained from this survey indicate that only six of the fifteen cities/towns have written disaster recovery plans at this time, and that all of the selected agencies/authorities/districts have written plans. In addition, it was determined that only three of the cities/towns and all but one of the agencies/authorities/districts with written plans have tested them. For security reasons, the Grand Jury is not divulging the names of the government entities that lack formal written disaster plans. Those entities not in compliance are aware of this deficiency, based on information furnished to the Grand Jury.

## **Finding**

Nine of the fifteen cities/towns in Santa Clara County do not have written disaster recovery plans for computer information systems; and not all written plans have been tested and updated.

## **Recommendation**

All cities/towns within Santa Clara County and all county agencies/authorities/districts should have written disaster recovery plans for mission-critical computer information systems, and should regularly test and update these plans. Managers, supervisors and other personnel with a “need to know” should have ready access to current versions of the plans.

**PASSED** and **ADOPTED** by the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury on this 20<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2003.

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Fred de Funiak  
Foreperson

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Ron R. Layman  
Foreperson Pro Tem

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Patricia L. Cunningham  
Secretary

## References

### Documents

County of Santa Clara, Audit of Data Center Operations, Information Services, Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System (SCVHHS) dated March 1, 2002 (County of Santa Clara Finance Agency Internal Audit Division, May 17, 2002).

Government Finance Officers Association (1750 K St. N.W., Suite 350, Washington, D.C. 20006), <http://www.gfoa.org/services/nl/computer-disaster-recovery.shtml>.

Letter dated January 2, 2003, RE: Information Systems Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City Manager, City of Morgan Hill.

Letter dated January 14, 2003, RE: Information System Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, County of Santa Clara, Office of the Sheriff.

Letter dated January 14, 2003, RE: Information Systems Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City of Mountain View.

Letter dated January 17, 2003, RE: Information System Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City of Campbell, City Manager's Office.

Letter dated January 16, 2003, Information Systems Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, Chief Executive Officer, Santa Clara Valley Water District.

Letter dated April 17, 2003, RE: Information Systems Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City of Palo Alto.

Letter dated January 6, 2003, RE: Information Systems Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City of Cupertino.

Letter dated January 14, 2003, RE: City of Gilroy's Information System Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City of Gilroy.

Letter dated January 15, 2003, RE: Information Systems Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, Town of Los Gatos, Office of the Town Manager.

Letter dated January 15, 2003, Information Recovery and Physical Security, City of Sunnyvale.

Letter dated January 15, 2003, Information Recovery and Physical Security, City of Santa Clara, Office of City Manager.

Letter dated April 1, 2003, RE: Information System Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City of Saratoga.

Letter dated January 17, 2003, RE: Information System Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, City of San Jose.

Letter dated January 16, 2003, RE: Information System Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, County of Santa Clara, Office of the County Assessor.

Letter dated January 23, 2003, RE: Information System Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, County of Santa Clara Department of Correction.

Letter dated March 25, 2003, RE: Information System and Physical Security, Los Altos Hills.

Letter dated January 16, 2003, RE: Information Systems and Disaster Recovery and Physical Security, Chief Operating Officer, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority.

Letter dated March 25, 2003, RE: Information System and Physical Security and Disaster Recovery, City of Monte Sereno, Office of the City Manager.

Letter dated December 10, 2002, RE: Information System and Disaster Recovery, County of Santa Clara, Office of the County Executive, Information Services Department.

Letter, dated November 22, 2002, RE: Information Security Policies, Chief Information Officer, SCVHHS.

Letter, dated April 14, 2003, RE: Update to Information Services Business Continuity Plan, Effective March 31, 2003, Robert C. Feldman, Chief Information Officer, Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System.

## **Meetings**

Chief Information Officer, Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, November 20, 2002.

Director, Business Development and Applications (and staff), Santa Clara County Information Services Department, October 23, 2002.