



August 17, 2026

The Honorable Rochelle C. East
Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco
400 McAllister Street, Room 206
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Judge East,

In accordance with Penal Code 933 and 933.05, the following is in response to the 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury Report, *Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform*. We would like to thank the members of the 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury for their interest in the City's emergency alerting systems and public warning practices.

The City agrees with many of the Jury's findings. Historically, City-originated emergency messages have not consistently included the five content elements identified by the Jury, nor have standardized closure procedures been established, due in part to concerns regarding the operational implications of mandating detailed, standardized language across varying emergency scenarios. Going forward, the City's public safety departments will collaborate to develop standardized language for the range of emergencies the City may face, ensuring greater consistency while preserving necessary operational flexibility.

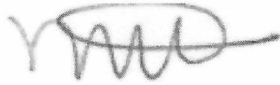
The City partially disagrees with certain of the Jury's findings regarding DEM's outreach infrastructure and public emergency information resources. While the Jury found that DEM's outreach has not yet become standing infrastructure, DEM has already undertaken meaningful steps toward establishing such infrastructure, including new communication channels, focus groups designed to reach a diverse range of subscribers, and outreach through paid media and partnerships with entities such as SFMTA, SFO, and local hotels. DEM's new ReadySF model launched in May 2025 as a mobile-first, multilingual platform for emergency information, and work is underway to formally establish it as the City's authoritative source for emergency updates.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Civil Grand Jury report findings and recommendations. Detailed responses from the Mayor's Office, Department of Emergency Management, Police Department, and Fire Department are attached.

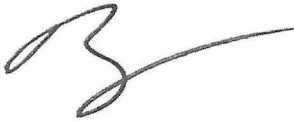
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "D. Lurie", written over a horizontal line.

Daniel Lurie
Mayor of San Francisco



Mary Ellen Carroll
Executive Director, Department of Emergency Management



Derrick Lew
Chief, Police Department



Dean Crispen
Chief, Fire Department

Report Title [Publication Date]	F#	Finding	Respondent Assigned by CGJ [Response Due Date]	Finding Response (Agree/ Disagree)	Finding Response Text
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F2	City-originated emergency messages do not consistently include these five content elements.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	City-originated messages do not consistently include all five content elements identified by the Jury.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F3	No citywide standard requires inclusion of these five content elements across city alerting channels.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	No citywide standard requires the inclusion of the five content elements identified by the Jury, in order to prioritize public safety and timeliness of emergency alerts.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F4	The Watch Center's protocols contain no criteria for message content quality.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	Current Watch Center protocols do not include criteria for message content quality.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F5	For most emergency incident types, there exist no written criteria that govern when Wireless Emergency Alerts, the City's most powerful channel, should be used, leaving the decision to the discretion of the Watch Center's on-duty manager.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	There is no written criteria that governs when Wireless Emergency Alerts should be used.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F6	The absence of written criteria means that decisions about when to use the most intrusive channel available to the city are made case-by-case, without the benefit of consistent thresholds developed in advance.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	The City agrees that written criteria could promote consistency in determining when to use Wireless Emergency Alerts.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F7	The city's emergency alerting protocols do not include closure procedures for any of the 38 incident types covered by Watch Center protocols.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	The City's emergency alert protocols do not include closure procedures.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F8	Standard closure messages do not communicate what changed, what actions can stop, or when the resolution occurred.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	Standard closure messages generally do not include these additional details.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F10	The absence of formal incident closure procedures means that the decision to issue a follow-up message, and what it says, is left to individual judgment.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	The City agrees formal closure procedures could improve the consistency of follow-up messages. The procedures should preserve necessary operational discretion.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F11	The city's primary opt-in alerting system reaches a small fraction of the people present in San Francisco on any given day.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	AlertSF, as an opt-in system, reaches a limited share of people present in San Francisco on any given day. During emergencies the City utilizes all available communication channels across Departments to reach a broader audience, including the Wireless Emergency Alert system which can readily reach over 90% of cell phone users in a given area.

Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F12	Wireless Emergency Alerts cannot deliver the sustained information an opt-in system like AlertSF provides during extended incidents.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Agree	Wireless Emergency Alerts are intended for major emergencies that require broad and immediate response from the public, and are not suited for sustained information like AlertSF.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F13	DEM has demonstrated ability to build effective audience outreach through event-specific campaigns, but these efforts have not become standing infrastructure.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Disagree partially	Event-specific campaigns have been an effective component of DEM's AlertSF audience growth strategy. In addition to these campaigns, DEM has developed ongoing efforts to expand and diversify its subscriber base, including a WhatsApp emergency alert channel, focus groups with prospective audiences, and ongoing paid media campaigns. Together, these efforts provide sustained outreach beyond individual events.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F14	The resources dedicated to growing and maintaining AlertSF do not reflect the system's stated operational role as the foundation of the city's opt-in alerting.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Disagree partially	The City agrees AlertSF is an important operational resource; however, ongoing investments have supported continued audience growth. Additionally, opt-in alerting is not foundational to the city's emergency public information strategy, which utilizes FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), including Wireless Emergency Alerts and the Emergency Alerting System.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F15	No standing strategy exists for reaching visitors or commuters beyond event-specific campaigns.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Disagree wholly	The City has continued to create standing strategies to reach visitors and commuters through collaboration with the SFMTA, and by distributing enrollment information at SFO and local hotels. This includes the new sf.gov/visitorsafety page, which the City has featured as a hub of information during multiple large events.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F16	No unified, mobile-first, multilingual public destination exists for emergency information.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Disagree wholly	DEM's new model of ReadySF was launched in May 2025 as a mobile-first multilingual public destination for emergency information. Continued work is underway to establish it formally.

Report Title [Publication Date]	R# [for F#]	Recommendation	Respondent Assigned by CGJ [Response Due Date]	Recommendation Response (Implementation)	Recommendation Response Text
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	R1 [for F2-F8, F10-F16]	By 1 January 2028, the Department of Emergency Management should adopt a Citywide Emergency Messaging Standard that requires all city-originated emergency messages, across AlertSF, WEA, EAS, and social media channels, to include the five content elements: source, hazard, location, guidance, and time. The standard should include content requirements for both initial alerts and closure messages, requirements for multilingual delivery consistent with the City's Language Access Ordinance, and a pre-send review step.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future	The City supports the implementation of a citywide Emergency Messaging Standard within reasonable operational constraints by January 1, 2028.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	R2 [for F2-F8, F10-F16]	By 1 January 2028, the Department of Emergency Management should adopt written criteria defining when Wireless Emergency Alerts are warranted across all 38 incident types the Watch Center handles. The criteria should address hazard severity, geographic scope, time sensitivity, and interaction with all other available channels.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future	The City supports creating written criteria defining the use of Wireless Emergency Alerts within reasonable operational constraints by January 1, 2028.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	R3 [for F2-F8, F10-F16]	By 1 January 2028, the Department of Emergency Management should require a closure or follow-up message for every incident type for which an initial alert is issued. Closure messages should communicate what changed, what protective actions can stop, and when the resolution occurred.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future	The City supports the implementation of a formal closure policy for incidents in which an initial alert is issued. This policy will include guidelines on message content within reasonable operational constraints.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	R4 [for F2-F8, F10-F16]	By 1 January 2028, the Department of Emergency Management should develop a dedicated audience growth strategy for AlertSF, including a standing approach to reaching visitors and commuters beyond event-specific campaigns. The strategy should include measurable enrollment targets and a regular reporting cadence to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Has been implemented	The Department of Emergency Management has already initiated a dedicated audience growth strategy for AlertSF which includes measurable enrollment targets, along with regular reporting to City Officials.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	R5 [for F2-F8, F10-F16]	By 1 January 2028, the Department of Emergency Management should publish a study setting forth what it would take to fully resource the audience growth strategy developed for AlertSF under Recommendation R4.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future	The Department of Emergency Management will publish a study on resourcing requirements and expected impacts of additional investments by January 1, 2028.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	R6 [for F2-F8, F10-F16]	By 1 July 2028, the Mayor and Board of Supervisors should determine whether to resource AlertSF to the extent set forth in DEM's study and, if not, determine what steps would be necessary for an AlertSF growth strategy.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Has been implemented	The appropriate level of resourcing for AlertSF will be considered together with the Board of Supervisors as part of the City's annual budget process.

Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	R7 [for F2-F8, F10-F16]	By 1 January 2028, the Department of Emergency Management should establish a consistent, mobile-first, multilingual public destination for emergency updates that is referenced across all alert channels and serves as the authoritative source for the public during and after an incident.	Mayor [August 17, 2026]	Has been implemented	The Department of Emergency Management has already begun formalizing the role of ReadySF as the authoritative public destination for emergency updates. This will be completed by January 1, 2028.
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Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F2	City-originated emergency messages do not consistently include these five content elements.	Department of Emergency Management [August 17, 2026]	Agree	City-originated messages do not consistently include all five content elements identified by the Jury.
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Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F9	Research has established that effective post-alert communication requires three components: resolution, action guidance, and status.	Department of Emergency Management [August 17, 2026]	Agree	
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Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F1	Five content elements — source, hazard, location, guidance, and time — are necessary in a public alert for the public to take timely protective action.	Fire Department [August 17, 2026]	Agree	The five content elements identified by the Jury - source, hazard, location, guidance, and time - are well established to increase the likelihood of timely protective action by the public.
Fog of Warning: San Francisco's Warning System That Warns but Doesn't Inform [June 18, 2026]	F2	City-originated emergency messages do not consistently include these five content elements.	Fire Department [August 17, 2026]	Agree	City-originated messages do not consistently include all five content elements identified by the Jury.
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