



CITY OF SAN MATEO
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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November 16, 2020

Hon. Danny Y. Chou
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Jenarda Dubois
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 8th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT: “Ransomware: It Is Not Enough To Think You Are Protected”

Honorable Judge Chou,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above referenced Grand Jury Report filed on October 7, 2020. The City of San Mateo’s response to both the findings and recommendations are listed below.

Response to Grand Jury Findings:

F1. Ransomware is a real and growing threat to public entities including those in San Mateo County.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding

F2. Across the country, local governments and schools represent 12% of all Ransomware attacks.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding

F3. The direct and indirect costs of Ransomware can be significant.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding.

F4. Cybersecurity reviews and assessments, and an updated, well-executed Cybersecurity plan, are critical components of IT security strategy.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding.

F5. A comprehensive Cybersecurity plan should include, at a minimum, information concerning prevention steps, spam and malware software, and backups and full recovery testing.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding.

F6. The identification of phishing attempts, including the use of spam filters, is an important component to protecting an IT system from Ransomware attacks.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding.

F7. Testing a full restore of a server to ensure that backups are reliable should be undertaken regularly as part an entity's backup plan to recover lost information.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding.

F8. Training of new employees, and the recurring training of existing employees, is an important component of defense against Ransomware.

Response: The City of San Mateo agrees with this finding.

Response to Grand Jury Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends that each governing body undertake its own confidential effort to protect against Ransomware attacks. Specifically:

R1. Each of the governmental entities in San Mateo County with an IT department or IT function (whether in-house, handled by another government unit or outsourced to a private enterprise) as listed in Appendix F, should by November 30, 2020, make a request for a report from their IT organization that addresses the concerns identified in the report, specifically:

1. System Security (Firewalls, Anti-malware/Antivirus software, use of subnets, strong password policies, updating/patching regularly)
2. Backup & Recovery (In the event of an attack, can you shut down your system quickly? What is being backed up, how it is being backed up, when are backups run, and where are the backups being stored? Have backups been tested? Can you fully restore a Server from a backup?)
3. Prevention (turning on email filtering, setting up message rules to warn users, providing employee training on phishing and providing a reporting system to flag suspect content)

Response: This recommendation has been implemented

The San Mateo City Manager's Office made this request of the City's IT Department upon receipt of the Grand Jury Report. The IT Department will prepare a study session presentation for council which will, at a minimum, address the concerns listed in R1.1, R1.2, and R1.3.

R2. These confidential internal reports should be provided to the governing body by June 30, 2021. This report should describe what actions have already been taken and which will be given timely consideration for future enhancements to the existing cybersecurity plan.

Response: This recommendation will be implemented by the June deadline

The City of San Mateo's IT department will prepare a comprehensive study session for City Council, planned for Q1 calendar year 2021, that addresses the concerns identified in the report. This report will include actions taken and plans for future enhancements.

R3. Given the results of their internal reports, governmental entities may choose to request further guidance by means of a Cybersecurity review from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and/or a cyber hygiene assessment from the County Controller's Office.

Response: This recommendation will be implemented on or before June 30, 2021

The City of San Mateo IT Department will make a request with the Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, for cyber-hygiene services before June 30, 2021.

R4. Given the results of their internal reports, governmental entities may choose to ask their IT departments to review their own Cybersecurity Plan with the detailed template provided by the FCC's Cybersecurity Planning Guide and consider customizing it using FCC's Create Custom Cybersecurity Planning Guide tool (see footnote 52).

Response: This recommendation will be implemented on or before June 30, 2021

The City of San Mateo IT Department will utilize the Federal Communications Commission Cyber Security Planning Guide and the FCC Cyber Security Planner to review and update our cyber-security plans. This work will be completed on or before June 30, 2021.

This response to the Grand Jury was approved at a public meeting on November 16, 2020.

Respectfully,

Joe Goethals,
Mayor – City of San Mateo