

R5	The County should review use of private cell phones for work activities.	
----	--	--

The following governing boards are required to respond within 90 days pursuant to Penal Code sections §933 and §933.05:

Board of Supervisors: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5,

The following elected county official is required to respond with 60 days:

County Auditor: F1, R1, R2, R4

The following appointed officials are invited to respond within 60 days:

Chief Administrative Officer: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6

Assistant CAO/Human Resources: F1, R1, R2, R4

Per Penal Code §933.05(a)(1) and (2), responses must include acceptance, refutation, and/or clarification of the findings, and a commitment to implementing the recommendations, as appropriate, per Penal Code §933.5(b)(1)(2)(3) and (4).

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

Complaints and Code Compliance

Multiple departments lack written procedures on how to handle, track, and respond to complaints. As a result, many citizens feel unheard and forgotten. The public is positioned to best understand the flaws of County processes; therefore, their complaints must be taken seriously. One of the County entities that handles the most complaints is the Code Compliance Division, housed under the Planning Department. The current Code Compliance Division processes and procedures illustrate some of the broader issues associated with complaint management across County departments.

The Code Compliance Division investigates complaints relating to code violations, for example, grading without a permit or structures built within setback areas, but life and safety issues are usually the primary concern with investigations. Investigations regarding code violations begin predominately with citizen complaints. A citizen can submit a Request for Investigation (RFI), anonymously or not. Reporting forms are available at the Planning Department and online. They can be mail, faxed, or emailed. Once an RFI is received, Code Compliance staff assigns an RFI number through the AS400/HTE system and tracks cases through an Excel spreadsheet with restricted access. The assigned RFI number does not necessarily carry through to other reviewing entities. Review of complaints by other County entities is generally completed via hard copy forms or over email.

Several County departments participate in the Code Compliance review process, like the Building Department, Assessor's Office, and Environmental Health Division. Processing RFIs properly takes time and adequate staff, however the Code Compliance Division currently has only two staff members, leading to delays in response time. Additionally, interdepartmental engagement can be slow, further preventing timely responses to potentially sensitive issues. Lastly, there are no clearly written processes and procedures for follow-through or enforcement of complaints, leading to approximately 400-500 active code cases in Mariposa County.

In an attempt to resolve issues associated with adequate functionality of and enforcement by the Code Compliance Division, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors established a new Code Compliance Advisory Committee (CCAC) on June 8, 2021. The primary purposes of the committee are to 1) develop recommendations to the Board for an effective code compliance process and program, and 2) develop recommendations for innovative public policy and programs that address residents' needs while also mitigating alleged violations. The committee is also charged with 3) supporting the work of staff in the conduct of fact finding and data gathering, and 4) providing periodic assessment and evaluation of and feedback to the Board regarding the success of an amended process and program. The CCAC was intended to be temporary and disbanded once an appropriate system for code enforcement was established. The CCAC has yet to be disbanded. Although progress has been shown to the Board of Supervisors in terms of establishing an action plan for the CCAC, there have been limited results as of the release of this report.

Although other County departments do not have the same complaint-centered services as the Code Compliance Division, the MCCGJ found that complaints were inconsistently managed between departments. There are few established systems for recording and considering complaints that are received. This lack of standardized policies and procedures for complaint management has led to inconsistencies in how complaints are addressed and resolved, causing frustration and distrust among residents. When complaints are not managed uniformly, some may go unresolved or receive inadequate attention, undermining the confidence citizens have in their local government.

A transparent standardized system for handling complaints is essential for several reasons. Uniform procedures ensure that every complaint is treated with the same level of importance and urgency, promoting fairness and preventing any perception of bias or favoritism. Clear policies and procedures also hold departments accountable for their responses to complaints, ensuring that issues are addressed promptly and effectively, which maintains the integrity of County operations. A transparent process allows citizens to understand how their concerns are being handled, reassuring residents that their voices are heard and valued. Standardized procedures streamline the handling of complaints, making the process more efficient and reducing the likelihood of oversight or error, which helps resolve issues more quickly and improves overall service delivery.

It is crucial for the integrity and effectiveness of County government that citizen complaints are handled in a consistent and transparent manner across all County departments. A uniform approach to managing and resolving complaints will better ensure that all citizens receive fair and equitable treatment. By prioritizing the development of these policies and procedures, the County can enhance the way it handles citizen complaints, leading to improved trust, transparency, and overall satisfaction within the community. Addressing this issue is not only a matter of good governance but also essential for fostering a positive relationship between the county government and its residents.

FINDINGS		RESPONSES
F1	A lack of clearly written procedures and standards for management and enforcement of code compliance cases has led to an overwhelming number of active cases, inconsistent follow-through and compromised code enforcement.	
F2	Inconsistent management of complaints between County departments has led to public frustration and disempowerment in providing feedback on county processes.	
RECOMMENDATIONS		RESPONSES
R1	The County should codify code enforcement standards and provide clearly written procedures for case management through the Code Compliance Advisory Committee with one (1) year.	
R2	The Board of Supervisors should require that uniform standards for managing complaints specific to County operations be established within one (1) year.	

The following governing boards are required to respond within 90 days pursuant to Penal Code sections §933 and §933.05:

Board of Supervisors: F1, F2, R1, R2,

The following appointed officials are invited to respond within 60 days:

Planning Director: F1, R1

Per Penal Code §933.05(a)(1) and (2), responses must include acceptance, refutation, and/or clarification of the findings, and a commitment to implementing the recommendations, as appropriate, per Penal Code §933.5(b)(1)(2)(3) and (4).

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.