

YOLO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

2025-2026

Esparto Fireworks Explosion: Officials Knew, None Acted

March 26, 2026

120 W Main Street, Suite A
Woodland, CA 95695
grandjury@yolocounty.gov
(530)406-5088

<https://www.yolocounty.gov/living/grand-jury>

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1 CIVIL GRAND JURY

1.1 ABOUT THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

The California Constitution requires that each county draws and summons at least one civil grand jury per year to guard the public interest by monitoring local government. Per California Code Section (§) 888.2, the Superior Court of Yolo County impanels 19 grand jurors. The civil grand jury term corresponds with each fiscal year (July - June). Citizens of the United States who have been residing in Yolo County for more than one year and are at least 18 years of age, with diverse and varied backgrounds, may serve their communities as civil grand jurors. The Yolo County Civil Grand Jury is an official, independent body of the court, not answerable to administrators or the Yolo County Board of Supervisors.

1.1.1 Grand Jury Formation

There are two types of grand juries in California.

1. A criminal grand jury weighs criminal charges then determines whether indictments should be returned (Penal Code §917)
2. A civil grand jury acts as the public's watchdog by:
 - a. Investigating and reporting on the affairs of local government (Penal Code §919-§925, et seq.)
 - b. Weighing allegations of misconduct against public officials (Penal Code §919, §922)
 - c. Determining whether to present formal accusations requesting removal of public officials from office (Penal Code §992)

1.1.2 Purpose

The purpose of any civil grand jury investigation is to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses and to make recommendations aimed at improving the services of the County and City governments, school districts and special districts. The civil grand jury then publishes its findings and may make recommendations to improve the quality and effectiveness of local government.

1.1.3 Recommendations

Recommendations from a civil grand jury are not binding on the public agency being investigated. However, the governing body of any entity must respond to the civil grand jury findings and recommendations within 90 days of report issuance, and an elected official or agency head must respond to the civil grand jury findings and recommendations within 60 days. The next year's civil grand jury may then evaluate and report on the required responses.

1.1.4 Approval

All reports included in this document have been approved by a super majority vote of at least 12 jurors. Jurors who have an actual or reasonably perceived conflict of interest in an investigation are obliged to recuse themselves from discussing and voting on the subject matter. All reports are reviewed by civil grand jury advisors to ensure compliance with current laws.

1.2 RESOLUTION

The Yolo County Civil Grand Jury 2025-2026

Approves by Resolution the Esparto Fireworks Explosion Report

WHEREAS, the 15 members of the 2025-2026 Yolo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted investigations and prepared an investigative report; and

WHEREAS, as is customary, the Grand Jury's specialized committees were each given primary responsibility for determining the investigation strategy, conducting interviews, gathering evidence, and producing reports; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. The Grand Jury finds the foregoing recitals are true and correct.
2. By adoption of this Resolution, the Grand Jury hereby approves the report, with the member count as shown below.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Grand Jury this 10th day of March 2026, as follows:

AYES: 13 Jurors
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: 1 Juror
ABSENT: 1 Juror

Signed,
Richard Zeiger
Richard Zeiger, Foreperson

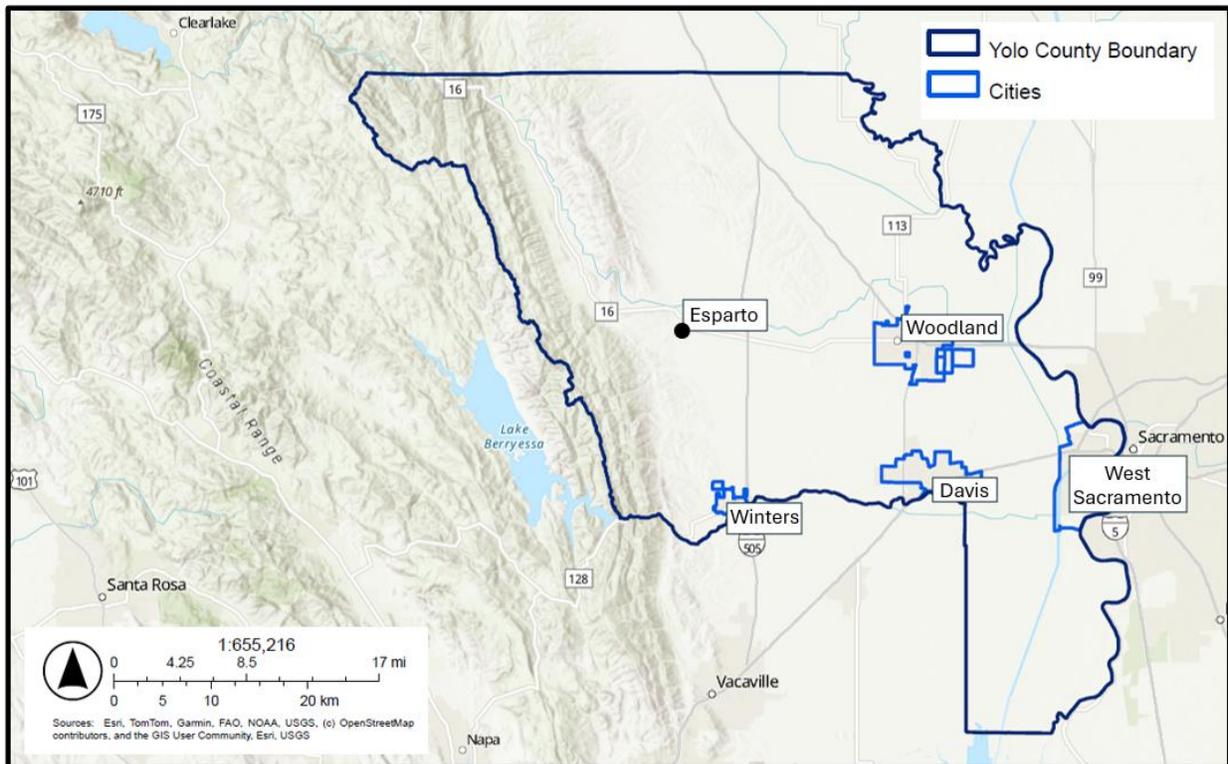
2 DESCRIPTION

2.1 SUMMARY

In the evening of July 1, 2025, massive explosions obliterated a family farm located at the northwest corner of County Roads 23 and 86A in Esparto. This incident, commonly known as the Esparto Fireworks Explosion, claimed the lives of seven workers. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) officially named this incident the Oakdale Fire. Esparto is an unincorporated community of about 3,700 residents. An investigation by the State Fire Marshal cited “illegal activities” as a root cause of the explosions at the farm, where Devastating Pyrotechnics LLC and Blackstar Fireworks, Inc. manufactured and stored dangerous fireworks without the benefit of local operating permits and business licenses.

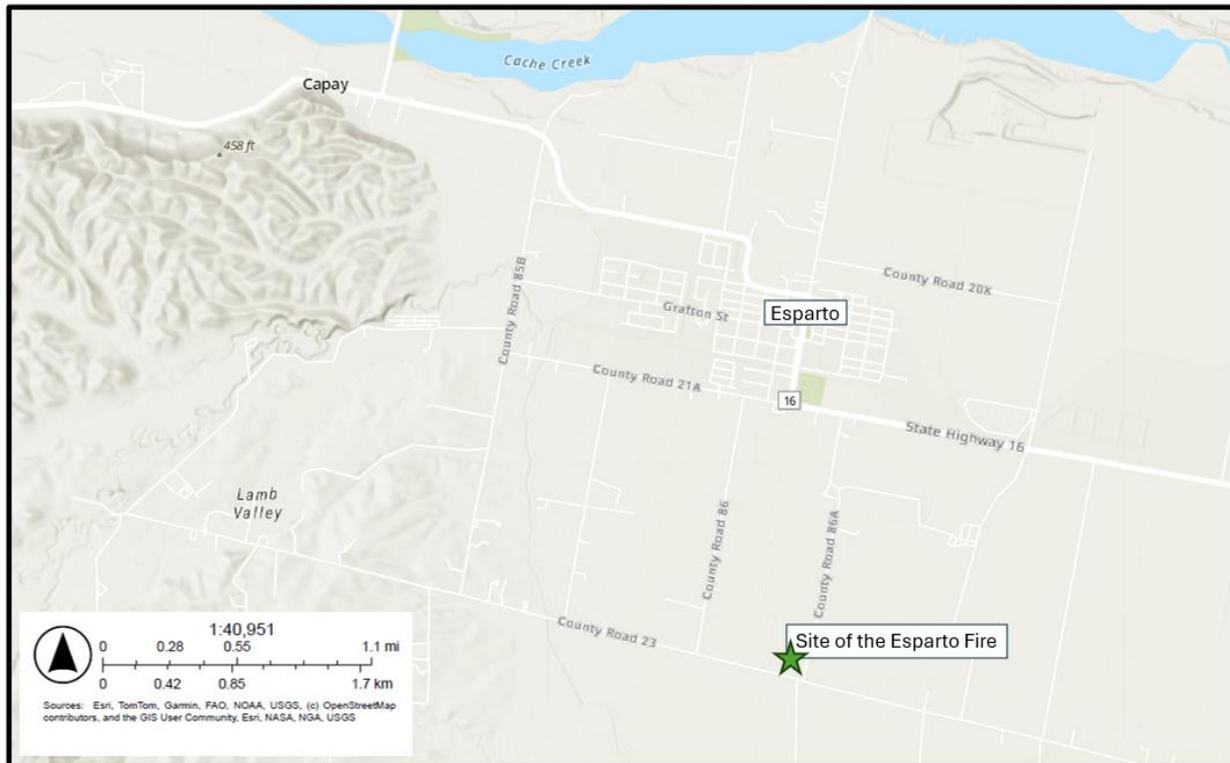
Public records indicate that various top Yolo County officials were aware of illegal fireworks operations at the site for at least three years prior to the incident. Inexplicably, no code enforcement occurred, even though all dangerous fireworks had been banned by ordinance throughout rural Yolo County since 2001. In the absence of official oversight and enforcement, unmitigated expansion of the fireworks businesses operating at the site in Esparto led directly to death and destruction from the Esparto Fireworks Explosion. Understanding the failure of the Yolo County code enforcement process is the goal of this Civil Grand Jury investigation.

Figure 1: Yolo County Map



A map of Yolo County showing county, city, and town boundaries. Source: [GIS Viewer Public](#)

Figure 2: Esparto Community Map



A map of Esparto area showing the location of the explosion site. Source: [GIS Viewer Public](#)

2.2 BACKGROUND AND EVENTS

Prior to 2015, long-time Esparto residents remember the sound of a solitary explosion in the afternoon sky, once in the Spring and another in the Fall. It was a signal to mind your animals because Jerry Matsumura was going to put on an aerial fireworks display that evening.

Jerry Matsumura set off the fireworks in the Spring to preview what explosives he wanted for shows around the Fourth of July holiday. The Fall display was to dispose of the leftovers. For Jerry Matsumura, who was a life-long Esparto resident and farmer, fireworks were a sideline, somewhere between an actual business and a hobby. He was an active member of the Western Pyrotechnic Association where he befriended other enthusiasts.

For Esparto residents, the fireworks displays were a rare treat. Many people viewed the fireworks displays as a community asset. That perception changed on the evening of July 1, 2025, when a massive explosion of dangerous stockpiled fireworks shook the surrounding community and damaged nearby properties. It was felt or heard by residents in Winters, Woodland and Davis, approximately 20 miles away. The explosion leveled the site and ignited what was named the [Oakdale Fire](#), which expanded to 78 acres including nearby properties. Seven employees of a company called Devastating Pyrotechnics were killed instantly, according to the County Coroner's Office. This was 10 years after Jerry Matsumura died. What had started as Jerry Matsumura's avocation, run from his farm, evolved over the decade after his passing into a substantial business

called Devastating Pyrotechnics that provided a variety of northern California cities with fireworks shows.

Figure 3: Fireworks Site



Aerial images showing the fireworks explosion site before and after the explosion. Source www.cbsnews.com

Figure 4: Fireworks Explosion



Aerial image showing explosion debris. Source: www.kcra.com

Figure 5: Fireworks Explosion



Photos taken at site Aug 2, 2025

When Jerry Matsumura died in 2015, his property remained in the Matsumura family as the homes for daughters Rieko Matsumura and Tammy Machado. Both daughters, along with Tammy Machado's husband, Sam Machado, were employed by the Yolo County Sheriff's Office at the time of the explosion. Sam Machado is a lieutenant in the Sheriff's office. Tammy Machado is in the legal department while Rieko Matsumura was the resident deputy in Esparto. Sam Machado and Tammy Machado were placed on paid administrative leave (where they remain as of the date of this publication) following the explosion. Rieko Matsumura was on disability leave due to an unrelated injury prior to the explosion and retired from the department in September 2025.

2.2.1 Business Expansion

Over the years, Kenneth Chee, owner of Devastating Pyrotechnics and former business partner of Jerry Matsumura, expanded his use on the property owned and occupied by Sam Machado and Tammy Machado. Reiko Matsumura resided in an adjacent property to the north. Additional containers to hold explosives gradually appeared on the Machado property. Devastating Pyrotechnics obtained permits from State and Federal agencies to operate, although no local use permit or business license was ever obtained.

As early as 2001, County ordinances prohibited any sort of fireworks business anywhere in the county. The ordinance was amended in June 2025 to clarify it applies to unincorporated areas of

Yolo County and to increase fines. Furthermore, the County zoning (Agricultural Intensive) allows only agricultural use on the property.

Figure 6: Devastating Pyrotechnics Site



Aerial view of Devastating Pyrotechnics site showing location of new metal building (2022-23) and explosive materials storage locations in 25 Conex boxes. Source: www.bing.com



Images from County officials, during electrical service meter release inspection for new metal building June 2, 2022, looking north, showing Conex boxes used for storing explosives.

Despite this, the fireworks business continued to expand and in December 2021 the landowners applied to Yolo County Building Division for an Exempt Agricultural Building Permit (BP2021-1028, Ag Exempt) to construct a new 4,500 sq. ft. metal building. The Ag Exempt designation requires a low-use building supporting an agricultural function that doesn't utilize much electricity and is not

intended for human occupancy. An Ag Exempt building requires neither a permit fee, nor inspections during or after construction.

However, when construction of the new metal building was near completion in April 2022, the building contractor ran into a problem. The property owner requested the installation of a 200-amp meter main electrical service panel, which the local electric utility, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), would not connect without seeing an inspection tag issued by the County Building Division. A 200-amp main service, which exceeds the threshold of 40-amps for a 4,500 sq. ft. Ag Exempt building, was not indicated in the original plans. This triggered not only a meter release inspection to satisfy PG&E but also resubmitting the building permit application as a commercial rather than an Ag Exempt building, now requiring full permitting.

The property owner agreed to the full permitting process, including revisions, fees, and inspections. Throughout this project and despite the additional electrical service, the owner and his contractor insisted to County officials that the building was for agricultural purposes and not human occupancy. The stated purpose of the building was to store almonds harvested from the adjacent orchard.

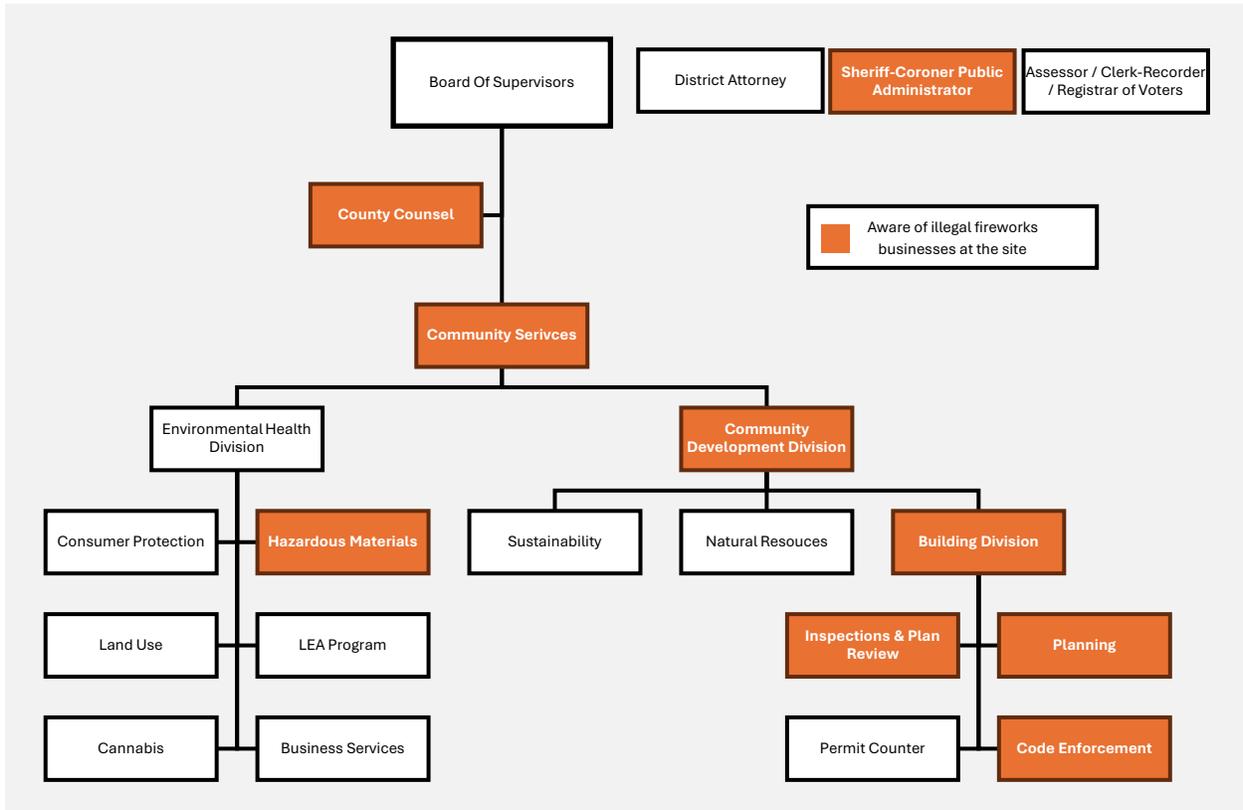
About this time (August to September 2021), Craig Cutright, the producer of shows for Devastating Pyrotechnics and resident on the Machado property, contacted County Planning Division officials to see if he could establish a new fireworks business on nearby property. According to available email records between Cutright and County officials, there is no evidence that County officials advised Cutright that fireworks businesses are illegal. Later, he started his own business, Blackstar Fireworks, which also operated on the Machado property. Throughout this process, he was working as a volunteer firefighter with the Esparto Fire District (February 2023 through the Fourth of July 2025).

2.2.2 Code Enforcement

On June 2, 2022, a County Building Services Department official reported receiving a “tip” that the property was being used by the two pyrotechnics businesses.

County Building Services Department officials in a series of emails said they were going out to the site to conduct an inspection, noting that they would “tread lightly” as the property was owned by sheriff’s deputies “...including deputies that we work with.” The emails went on to say that there would be further discussion following the inspection.

Figure 7: Abridged Yolo County Organizational Chart



Simplified Yolo County Organizational chart highlighting groups with knowledge of illegal fireworks businesses operating at the site before the explosion.

Later, on June 2, 2022, building officials reported that there were, in fact, pyrotechnic businesses operating at the site. Building officials noted that Esparto fire officials had said the businesses were approved by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and that both “safe and sane” fireworks and dangerous fireworks were stored in containers on the property. Building officials also reported that they had been told the new building would be used for agricultural purposes.

Figure 8: Firework Classifications



Following the site visit, the County Community Services Department took steps toward a possible enforcement action against the property. But within days, this conversation about the site – at least in email records provided by the County – abruptly ceased. The department failed to take any action, and the fireworks business continued to quietly operate and even expand.

The Grand Jury interviewed numerous County officials, but no one could recall any further conversations or meetings about the site. That said, the Grand Jury was told Community Services Department officials were aware that County ordinances prohibited fireworks at that location. In fact, County officials processed between April and June of 2025 an amendment to the County Code section prohibiting fireworks, but no mention of the site was referenced in reports.

The Grand Jury could not determine definitively why County planning and code enforcement officials never pursued the matter further even though they were clearly aware that this business use was not allowed under County ordinances.

Although numerous local officials, including Sheriff’s deputies, fire officials, officials in the County building, code enforcement, planning and County Counsel’s office, all knew about the fireworks businesses, none of them took any action.

Through interviews and the review of documents received, the Grand Jury has uncovered several possible contributing factors:

- Given the long-standing use of the property for a small-scale pyrotechnics business, officials did not perceive the operations they observed while inspecting the new building as any significant departure.

- There was miscommunication between staff from the Building Division and Code Enforcement Division over whether an enforcement letter had been sent, with some assuming it had been. But it is unclear why there was no follow-up on this point.
- County officials believed that State and Federal officials, who had issued licenses for the businesses, were in fact responsible for monitoring the businesses. The Grand Jury did not discover any evidence that the County had checked with these agencies. There is no record of CAL FIRE ever inspecting the property.
- The County Building and Code Enforcement Divisions are understaffed and in June 2022 had a backlog of some 300 cases to investigate. There is no record that a formal complaint was filed about this site. These divisions had no formal process for prioritizing enforcement actions. In addition, the Code Enforcement Division relies on the services of the Sheriff's office for access to some properties subject to enforcement. It is possible there may have been a reluctance to antagonize some sheriff's officials by initiating an enforcement action on property owned by sheriff's department employees. Perhaps, in the absence of a deliberate decision to take some action, enforcement at this particular property was never conducted.
- The Grand Jury received testimony that for several years the Board of Supervisors has given code enforcement a low priority. The Grand Jury also received testimony that attempts to expand enforcement were rebuffed in part because the Board of Supervisors believed agricultural landowners should be allowed to have considerable leeway in the use of their property, provided they were not actually harming their neighbors or the community at large. Further, agricultural owners support a wide variety of community services and programs.
- It is possible many Esparto area residents perceived the pyrotechnics businesses as a community asset. It provided employment, put on local fireworks shows, and donated fireworks to fundraising shows for the local fire district.
- Finally, although no County official could recall such a decision, Building Division's officials may have decided that attempting to enforce the County ordinances was too much trouble, allowing interest to gradually fade away.

Whatever the cause – and the lack of subsequent documentation remains a significant concern to the Grand Jury – in the years after the new structure was completed in 2023, it appears that the pyrotechnic business activities continued at the site and, with the new building in place, greatly increased.

2.2.3 Aftershock

On the evening of July 1, 2025, everything changed. A series of massive explosions destroyed most of the structures at the property and shook buildings as far away as Winters, Davis, and Woodland. Seven workers died that afternoon. On December 1, 2025, the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (CAL/OSHA) issued 15 citations to San Francisco-based Devastating Pyrotechnics and its successors, totaling \$221,000 in penalties.

On July 18, 2025, the Yolo County Board of Supervisors requested that the California Attorney General assume the investigation from the Yolo County District Attorney, citing:

“...our strong belief that the public perception and integrity of the investigation elements currently being carried out at the local level would be best served by the direct involvement of the Department of Justice. The Yolo County Board of Supervisors welcomes the Department of Justice’s immediate intervention to manage this complex investigation, maintain public confidence, and ensure the investigations are completed without any potential conflicts...”

However, on August 8, 2025, the California Attorney General’s Office declined to lead the investigation, citing confidence in the ability of CAL FIRE investigators and the apparent absence of “office-wide disabling conflict” in the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office [letter dated August 8, 2025, from Special Assistant Attorney General Jamal H. Anderson to Dr. Mary Vixie Sandy, President, Yolo County Board of Supervisors].

On August 28, 2025, the Board of Supervisors issued an update of the County’s response to the July 1 event. The Board of Supervisors stated,

“The County has launched an internal review of its code enforcement processes, procedures, and staffing. Findings and recommendations will be presented to the County Administrator’s Office and reported publicly to the Board of Supervisors for consideration and potential action.”

Furthermore, the Board of Supervisors’ statement said,

“The Board of Supervisors reaffirms its commitment to public safety, accountability, and transparency, and will continue to keep the community informed.”

However, the Grand Jury finds no evidence that the County has engaged in any sort of thorough or systematic review of its own processes or procedures. No group or individual has been put in charge of any review, although the Grand Jury has received reports that some individual County employees have informally considered potential changes to certain organizational processes.

The County has hired an outside legal firm to investigate activities in the Community Services Department. This firm’s expertise is investigating personnel problems, not the structural problems within the Yolo County government that allowed a fireworks business to operate at the Esparto site. Furthermore, the contract stipulates that the results of the investigation will be covered by attorney-client privilege, which means the results may never become public. If this is the entirety of the Board of Supervisor’s approach, it contradicts the Board of Supervisor’s promise of accountability and transparency.

2.2.4 Misconduct of Public Officers

The Yolo County Grand Jury is only one of several entities investigating the Esparto explosions. The Yolo County District Attorney is considering potential criminal charges where appropriate. CAL FIRE has investigated the cause of the explosions and on February 2, 2026, published a press release indicating they had completed their investigation and released their report to the District Attorney along with its conclusion that unspecified “illegal activities” had occurred on the site.

Because of these parallel investigations, the Grand Jury has been cautious about the scope of its own investigation activities, coordinating where possible with other agencies so that its inquiries did not interfere with theirs. Most investigations by civil grand juries are confined by law to the administrative functions of local government. The results of this report reflect this focused scope.

However, one section of the penal code, section 919(c), requires

“The grand jury shall inquire into the willful or corrupt misconduct in office of public officers of every description within the county.”

If the Grand Jury determines that willful or corrupt misconduct has occurred, the Grand Jury may issue an “accusation” against a public officer, initiating a criminal trial. If convicted, the penalty for this offense is removal from office.

Because of the ongoing nature of other investigations, the Yolo County Grand Jury has, to this point, not opened a full investigation into any individual under Penal Code section 919(c). But the Yolo County Grand Jury reserves the right to launch such an investigation as circumstances may warrant.

The Grand Jury has identified nearly a dozen County employees who knew over the years of the pyrotechnics operations at the Esparto site but failed to take any remedial action. County records show communication between most of these employees, some now retired, concerning the Esparto fireworks site. Despite this, there is no record that any of them advocated for enforcement of existing County ordinances.

2.2.5 Board of Supervisors

The Grand Jury has concluded that the failure of these employees to act is not solely theirs. The Grand Jury heard testimony that the Board of Supervisors over the years fostered a culture of tolerance for code violations that percolated through County bureaucracy.

The Board of Supervisors has repeatedly rejected attempts to augment enforcement activities. Further, the Grand Jury heard testimony that County employees believe the Board of Supervisors wanted them to take a tolerant approach toward code violations that seemed minor.

Combined with the fact that the property was owned by officials who worked for the Sheriff’s Office, this approach seems to have contributed toward employees turning a blind eye toward a violation that eventually allowed an illegal business to expand and ultimately resulted in the death of seven people, destruction of the residential and commercial buildings on site, a 78-acre fire and damage to residences, buildings, and agricultural acreage on surrounding properties.

2.2.6 Aftermath

As of February 2, 2026, CAL FIRE has investigated the cause of the explosion and sent information within its full report to the District Attorney saying it believes “illegal activities” were occurring at the explosion site. The report has not been made public as of March 10, 2026. The two Sheriff’s employees who owned the property and resided there were put on paid leave July 10, 2025, while their case is being investigated by the Sheriff’s office. The District Attorney is pursuing potential criminal charges. CAL/OSHA is seeking \$221,000 in fines from Devastating Pyrotechnics. Local farming interests (Etta James Farming) have sued the fireworks operators and landowners for

losses they incurred on property adjacent to the fireworks site. The State task force on fireworks issued wide-ranging recommendations to CAL FIRE's General Fireworks Advisory Committee. Meanwhile, the families of those who died have few answers, but have filed a \$35 million dollar claim against Yolo County, State fireworks regulators and several public officials alleging widespread negligence for allowing an illegal and unsafe fireworks operation to continue.

3 METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury’s approach toward investigating the Esparto Fireworks Explosion (Oakdale Fire) was comprised of the following methods:

- Toured the perimeter of the explosion site located at the northwest corner of County Roads 23 and 86A, Esparto, California on two occasions and observed adjacent properties
- Reviewed various publicly available documents, including the:
 - Yolo County 2030 Countywide General Plan
 - Yolo County Zoning Code
 - Municipal Service Review (MSR) and Sphere of Influence (SOI) Update for the Fire Protection Agencies (LAFCO No. 21-05), adopted July 28, 2022, prepared by Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
 - Yolo County Code of Ordinances, Title 4, Chapter 2 “Fireworks”
- Conducted more than 40 hours of interviews with 24 current or former staff and volunteers with history and experience with the County and regarding the subject Esparto site, from:
 - the Yolo County Board of Supervisors
 - the Yolo County Community Services Department
 - the Yolo County Sheriff’s Office
 - the Esparto Fire Department
 - the Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission
- Reviewed recorded video presentations and minutes from the Yolo County Board of Supervisors meetings
- Reviewed various news reports from a variety of local print, radio, and television sources with respect to the Oakdale Fire and the fireworks incident
- Reviewed documents received from the County Counsel on behalf of other departments from key personnel, including:
 - Yolo County Community Service Department budgets (2022-2025) and organizational charts (2022-2025)
 - Parcel information for the subject site and adjacent parcels
 - Business license information
 - Building permit approval for the Ag Exempt building, dated Jan. 13, 2022, and for the BP2022-0849 Certificate of Occupancy for Installation of New Metal Building (Commercial: Storage), dated April 20, 2023
 - Land Use Agreement 71-592, for Williamson Act Contract, dated November 8, 1971 (and recorded on January 24, 1972)
- Reviewed official websites, including:
 - Yolo County Board of Supervisors Statements regarding Oakdale Fire

- CAL FIRE
 - California Legislative Information
 - Esparto Fire District
 - Yolo County Community Services Department
 - Yolo County Office of Emergency Services
 - Yolo County Sheriff's Office
- The Yolo County Counsel's Office, which normally provides legal services to the civil grand jury, recused itself from participating in this report in July 2025. The grand jury concurs with this decision. Legal services for this report were provided by the Solano County Counsel's Office at no charge to Yolo County.

4 FINDINGS

Pursuant to [Penal Code 925](#),

The grand jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts, and records of the officers, departments, or functions of the county including those operations, accounts, and records of any special legislative district or other district in the county created pursuant to state law for which the officers of the county are serving in their ex officio capacity as officers of the districts.

4.1 YOLO COUNTY

- F1. Illegal fireworks businesses operated in Yolo County in violation of County ordinances for many years.
- F2. Enforcement of those ordinances would have prevented death and destruction from the Esparto fireworks explosion.

4.2 YOLO COUNTY FIRE DISTRICTS

- F3. Yolo County Fire Districts do not have the resources to provide fire prevention programs to their communities, nor provide sufficient training for district chiefs and firefighters.
- F4. Yolo County Fire Districts lack the ability to coordinate activities with other County districts.
- F5. Yolo County Fire Districts lack the ability to coordinate with other County, State, and Federal agencies.

4.3 YOLO COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- F6. The Community Services Department lacks appropriate formal training programs for new employees. Instead, instruction is provided informally via on-the-job mentoring.
- F7. Community Services Department employees are not trained on a wide variety of County ordinances that would increase public safety and County revenues.
- F8. Yolo County lacks an effective electronic system for keeping track of code enforcement cases.
- F9. Yolo County operational code enforcement procedures are ineffective, and not in a state of control.
- F10. Yolo County's systems are isolated across departments, which impedes effective exchange of specialized information.
- F11. Code enforcement activities are sometimes performed without documentation or effective procedures to evaluate the quality of the work and its timely completion.

- F12. The lack of effective code enforcement procedures allows County staff to avoid challenging or uncomfortable cases by selectively prioritizing less critical activities.
- F13. The Community Services Department employs only one full-time code enforcement officer to enforce County codes across nearly one thousand square miles of unincorporated Yolo County area.

4.4 YOLO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

- F14. The Board of Supervisors has encouraged a laissez-faire attitude toward new construction and businesses located in unincorporated areas.
- F15. The Board of Supervisors has not provided adequate resources for the enforcement of building and safety codes.
- F16. At the time (2022-2023) building permits were issued for the Machado property the following County officials failed to enforce California Fire Code and Yolo County Fireworks Ordinances:
 - a. Department of Community Services Chief Assistant Director
 - b. Principal Planner
 - c. Chief Building Official
 - d. Supervising Hazardous Materials Specialist
 - e. Code Enforcement Officer
 - f. Building Inspector(s)
 - g. Esparto Fire Protection District Chief
 - h. Yolo County Sheriff's Lieutenant
 - i. Yolo County Sheriff's Esparto Resident Deputy

4.5 YOLO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

- F17. Sheriff deputies failed to enforce Yolo County Fireworks Ordinances.
- F18. The Sheriff Lieutenant failed to obtain the required prior approval from the Sheriff for his financial interest in the fireworks business on his property.
- F19. The Sheriff's Office does not adequately review the documented outside employment by sworn officers.
- F20. The Sheriff's Office does not provide its sworn staff with adequate training on enforcement of County ordinances.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to [Penal Code 933](#),

Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year.

5.1 YOLO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The 2025-2026 Yolo County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Yolo County Board of Supervisors:

- R1. Beginning in the 2026-27 fiscal year, create the position of Yolo County Fire Warden, to:
 - a. Establish a fire prevention and inspection program in the unincorporated portions of the County;
 - b. Facilitate cooperation and communication among the County Fire Districts, and provide consistent and continued training to develop expertise and accountability among Fire District Chiefs;
 - c. Act as the County's liaison with appropriate State and Federal agencies.
- R2. Direct the County Community Services Department to establish an enhanced professional ethics training program to be delivered to all Community Services staff annually, that emphasizes:
 - a. the employee's responsibility to protect public safety;
 - b. recognizing and reporting on potential public safety hazards; and
 - c. identifying and reporting potential zoning violations.
- R3. Direct the County Community Services Department to provide annual training covering the County Code of Ordinances to relevant employees in the following divisions: Planning, Building, Code Enforcement, and Environmental Health. The training shall focus on the employees' responsibilities for enforcement of codes under their purview. The training content should include pertinent sections of the following codes:
 - a. County Fireworks Ordinance ([Chapter 2, Section 4-2](#))
 - b. County Zoning Code for Rural Home Occupation ([Section 8-2.306ab](#))
 - c. County Agricultural Zoning ([Chapter 2, Sections 3](#))
 - d. California Building Codes 2025 ([Volumes 1 and 2, Title 24, Part 2](#))
 - e. California Fire Code 2025 ([Title 24, Part 9](#))
- R4. Direct the Department of Community Services to develop a monitoring program by December 31, 2026, to:

- a. use aerial surveys to identify new construction within the unincorporated county;
and
 - b. verify that all construction is properly permitted.
- R5. Starting in the 2026-27 fiscal year, augment county code enforcement by:
- a. one additional full-time employee (FTE) for code enforcement; and
 - b. an additional one-half FTE as a clerical position to maintain and update the code enforcement tracking system.
- R6. Starting in the 2026-27 fiscal year, create a full-time position for a County-wide Business Systems Analyst reporting to the County Chief Administrative Officer, with the responsibility of consulting with individual departments to effect operational improvements within the department and across all County services.
- a. The analyst's role is to provide the following consultation services to individual departments via short-term (2-4 month) focused assignments, to:
 - i. Assist in documenting processes: current workflows, future workflows, identify gaps, risks, waste, and opportunities for improvement;
 - ii. Assist in the creation of standard operating procedures;
 - iii. Design solutions to operational challenges by recommending system upgrades, or new technologies;
 - iv. Facilitate incremental improvement projects.
 - b. The analyst duties are to provide the following services to the County generally, to:
 - i. Maintain a generalized understanding of all County operations;
 - ii. Facilitate collaboration within and across departments that provide opportunities to improve County services (speed, cost, quality);
 - iii. Work closely with IT teams to oversee the implementation of new systems or enhancements, ensuring effective integration with existing operational procedures;
 - iv. Assist the County in defining functional requirements of digital systems and validate the implemented systems function as intended;
 - v. Act as an intermediary with 3rd party software vendors/developers to evaluate and ensure implemented solutions meet County needs.
- R7. Request Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to revisit its July 28, 2022 Municipal Services Review (MSR) for fire protection agencies and initiate where feasible a process for joining adjacent fire districts.
- a. Request LAFCO evaluate aggregating adjacent fire districts, as suggested in the MSR (July 28, 2022).

5.2 YOLO COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The 2025-2026 Yolo County Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors directs the Community Services Department to:

- R8. Document processes for all routine workflows, which should include:
 - a. Process maps showing routine workflows;
 - b. Standard operating procedures;
 - c. Training/qualification programs for procedures and systems; and
 - d. Define expected reasonable timeframes and outcomes for each process step.
- R9. Implement a system for tracking the completion of all routine work, which should include:
 - a. Permanent traceable records of activities performed and decisions made; and
 - b. Enabled auditing of metrics, activities by parcel or agent.
- R10. Implement a system for tracking the administration of non-routine work, which should include:
 - a. documenting staff training and certifications. The system should provide training metrics for individual employees and departments;
 - b. reporting and tracking deviations from standard operating procedures or outcomes, with a permanent traceable record of activities performed, expert evaluations, and decisions made; and
 - c. monitoring overall progress of routine workflows, and intervening as necessary to ensure work conforms to standard procedures and expectations.

5.3 YOLO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The 2025-2026 Yolo County Grand Jury recommends the Yolo County Sheriff's Office:

- R11. Provide additional training to all sworn deputies on significant Yolo County Ordinances and how to report potential violations to appropriate County divisions.
- R12. Ensure appropriate metrics exist that monitor the quantity and type of ordinance violations reported by sworn officers.
- R13. Review outside employment policies with all Sheriff's Office employees.
- R14. Perform an audit of existing approvals for outside employment to ensure they are aligned with department policies.
- R15. Require employees to seek approval for outside employment annually.
- R16. Prior to approving any outside employment, the Sheriff shall ensure the involved business(s) are compliant with all required local, State, or Federal operating permits.

6 RESPONSES

Recommendations from a Civil Grand Jury are not binding on the public agency being investigated. However, the governing body of any entity must respond to the Civil Grand Jury findings and recommendations within 90 days of report issuance, and an elected official or agency head must respond to the Civil Grand Jury findings and recommendations within 60 days. The next year's Civil Grand Jury may then evaluate and report on the required responses.

6.1 REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section(s) 933(c) and 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses to its Findings and Recommendations within 90 days as follows:

Entity	Recommendations
Yolo County Board of Supervisors	R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10

Pursuant to Penal Code section(s) 933(c) and 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses to its Findings and Recommendations within 60 days as follows:

Entity	Recommendations
Yolo County Sheriff's Office	R11, R12, R13, R14, R15, R16

6.2 INVITED RESPONSES

The Grand Jury requests responses to its Findings and Recommendations within 60 days as follows:

Entity	Recommendations
Eric Zane Woodland Fire Chief	R1
Michael Webb County Chief Administrative Officer	R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6
Philip Pogledich County Counsel	R3
Christine Crawford LAFCO Executive Officer	R7
Adam Fieseler Community Services Director	R8, R9, R10

7 REFERENCES

7.1 ACRONYMS

TERM	DESCRIPTION
AMP	Abbreviation for Ampere, the SI base unit of electrical current
ATF	U. S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CAL/OSHA	California Division of Occupational Safety and Health
FTE	Full Time Employee
LAFCO	Local Area Formation Commission
MSR	Municipal Services Review
SOI	Sphere of Influence

7.2 GLOSSARY

TERM	DESCRIPTION
AG EXEMPT	<p>Refers to an Exempt Agricultural Building Permit. The owner or builder of an Ag Exempt building must submit an application and site plan to the Yolo County Department of Community Services, Building Division for administrative review and verification of use.</p> <p>An Agricultural Building is defined as a structure designed and constructed to house farm implements, hay, grain, poultry, livestock or other horticultural products. The structure shall not be a place of human habitation or a place of employment where agricultural products are processed, treated or packaged, nor should it be a place used by the public.</p>
CODE ENFORCEMENT LETTER	<p>A formal notice of property violation(s) based on County ordinances typically resulting from a complaint or inspections.</p>
CONEX BOX	<p>A Conex box is a durable, metal shipping container originally developed by the U.S. military, with the name derived from "Container Express".</p>
DANGEROUS FIREWORKS	<p>California Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 12505, defines dangerous fireworks as those determined to be unsafe for use by the general public. This includes specific, hazardous items prohibited for general consumer use, such as those containing arsenic, boron, or chlorates, as well as firecrackers, rockets, roman candles, aerial devices, and items that explode, travel through the air, or are deemed unsafe by the State Fire Marshal.</p>
HUMAN OCCUPANCY	<p>Building codes define human occupancy based on the intended use of a space to ensure safety.</p>
LAISSEZ-FAIRE	<p>A doctrine opposing governmental interference in economic affairs beyond the minimum necessary for the maintenance of peace and property rights</p>

	<p>A philosophy or practice characterized by a usually deliberate abstention from direction or interference especially with individual freedom of choice and action.</p>
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION	<p>Yolo LAFCO is an independent agency responsible for the implementation of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. Yolo LAFCO is empowered to review, approve or deny boundary changes, city annexations, consolidations, special district formations, incorporations for cities and special districts, and to establish local "Spheres of Influence". The Sphere of Influence for each governmental agency is a plan for its future boundary and service area. The LAFCO function is outlined in Government Code, Section 56000 et seq., known as the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (CKH).</p>
MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEW	<p>Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs) are designed to equip LAFCO with relevant information and data necessary for the Commission to make informed decisions on Spheres of Influence. LAFCO has broad discretion in deciding how to conduct MSRs, including geographic focus, scope of study, and the identification of alternatives for improving the efficiency, cost effectiveness, accountability and reliability of public services.</p>
OAKDALE FIRE	<p>The Oakdale Fire occurred on July 1, 2025, at approximately 6 pm, in the unincorporated area of Yolo County, outside the community of Esparto at a site operating as a commercial fireworks facility. The blaze, and subsequent explosions, burned approximately 78 acres and tragically took the lives of seven people. Multiple agencies responded to the incident. On August 11, 2025, Yolo County Public Health Officer declared a Local Health Emergency for properties impacted by the incident in a declaration.</p>
RURAL HOME OCCUPATION	<p>The gainful employment of the occupant(s) of a rural dwelling, with such employment activity being subordinate to the residential and/or agricultural use of the property, subject to provisions in Yolo County Zoning Code Section 8-2.306(ab)</p>

SAFE AND SANE FIREWORKS	<p>California Health and Safety Code (HSC) section 12529, indicates Safe and sane fireworks are those tested and approved by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and that have been carefully examined and tested by the State Fire Marshal to be in compliance with the general and specific standards for design, construction, performance, and labeling for “safe and sane” fireworks.</p> <p>These are the fireworks commonly available for purchase from temporary sales booths in the weeks prior to the Fourth of July.</p>
SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	<p>The Sphere of Influence for each governmental agency is a plan for its future boundary and service area.</p>
WILLIAMSON ACT	<p>The Williamson Act restricts the uses of agricultural and open space lands to farming and ranching purposes during the length of the contract period. Parcels subject to Williamson Act receive lower tax rates to encourage retaining higher quality agricultural lands. The Williamson Act was also envisioned as a way for local governments to integrate the protection of open space and agricultural resources into their overall strategies for planning urban growth patterns. The minimum term for contracts is ten years and automatically renews on each anniversary date of the contract, thus the actual term is essentially indefinite or if cancelled starts a new term of ten years.</p>

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2025-2026 Yolo County Civil Grand Jury would like to acknowledge the Solano County Counsel Office, especially Megan J. Callaway for assistance and support to the Grand Jury throughout the process of conducting our investigation and preparing this report.