



## **TODD SPITZER**

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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### **Spitzer Calls for Joint Sheriff-OC Fire Authority Helicopter base at John Wayne Airport**

(Santa Ana, CA) – The Grand Jury released a report today on dual efforts by the Orange County Sheriff’s Dept. and Orange County Fire Authority in emergency responses, however they reached a conclusion that is impractical, Supervisor Todd Spitzer said Friday.

The report makes the recommendation that the OCFA heliport in Fullerton should also be staffed by the Sheriff’s Department in order to pool resources. It says this would cut down on response time, save money and make the agencies work closer together.

However, Spitzer says response time from Fullerton takes longer than if aircraft originated from John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana, a central hub for the county. The Sheriff’s fleet of helicopters is currently stationed there.

“It does not matter the color of the helicopter, if it’s red or green or something else,” Spitzer said. “The public expects a quick and safe response.”

He added:

“As we all realize, minutes matter in emergencies and to be 15 minutes further away is the difference between life and death,” Spitzer said. “These helicopters are critical to public safety requiring a quick response to fires, drownings, shootings, car accidents and any other emergency you could think of.”

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Spitzer has already spoken to John Wayne Airport officials about the possibility of having the two agencies locate their heliports there. He gave the officials instructions to research the topic during their expansion design phase.

The response was met with agreement.

“For the past few months, I have been asking both the Sheriff and Fire Chief to negotiate this issue so we can get the item before the Board of Supervisors for approval,” Spitzer said. “This grand jury report highlights the urgency of this situation.”

The recent Santiago Canyon fire near the 241 toll road in Spitzer’s district was quickly controlled and extinguished thanks to a joint effort by OCSD and FCA. Both agencies sent water dropping helicopters that helped suppress the spread of the fire.

Spitzer responded to the fire immediately and witnessed the coordination between the two agencies. He would like to see such coordination continue.

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