



ZAYANTE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

7700 E. Zayante Rd
Felton Ca. 95018

Date: December 19, 2025
To: Board of Directors, Fire Chiefs – SLV Fire Districts Council
From: Board Chair, Mary Clark, Zayante Fire District
Subject: RING System and Alternative Strategies – Informational Workshop

Invitation: From the Zayante Fire Board of Directors for an Informational workshop addressing the Santa Cruz County Regional Interoperable Next Generation (RING) Radio System and alternative radio system strategies.

Save the date : January 22nd, 2026 from 6pm – 8pm.

Location : Zayante Fire Station 7700 E. Zayante Rd. Felton, CA 95018

RSVP : to facilitate logistical support (light refreshments and appetizers will be provided)

Email : firechief@zayantefire.com by January 19th with your RSVP>

Purpose

To provide Fire District Directors' adequate background information and a forum to clarify and understand the impact of the RING system on Fire District operations, the fiscal impact and the governance structure prior to decision making. Receive and discuss an overview to RING and alternate strategies to the RING system.

Background

On December 9, 2025 the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors approved the RING System proposal and engaged in a \$28 million dollar project with 10 year financing.

The Santa Cruz Fire Chiefs Association has expressed significant reservations with the plan. Concerns focus on the governance structure, non-voting representation, supplanting of Net County costs, subscriber fee structure, service reliability and inequitable cost allocation formulas.

The adopted Master Service Agreement and current Agency cost burden is attached for your review.

The County of Santa Cruz projects participating members will contribute proportionally beginning FY26 for system support services. System buildout is not anticipated for three years starting FY30-FY32.

The MSA proposes an initial term of 10 years. Any member may withdraw providing 24 month notice and will remain responsible for its share of Operational and Capital fees until the withdrawal is effective.

Presenters will include Chief Correira, Scotts Valley Fire as representative to RING for the Santa Cruz County Fire Chiefs Association ; Chief Jeff Maxwell, Zayante on the past and present radio system history ; Chief Jed Wilson, CZU Unit Chief on Cal Fire Dispatch processes. Others are welcome to add to the agenda to better inform our decision makers.



Santa Cruz County Fire Chief's Association

President – Rob Oatey
Vice President – Jason Nee
Secretary – Mark Correira
Treasurer – Stacie Brownlee

December 8, 2025

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean St., Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing on behalf of the County Fire Chief's Association to express our concerns regarding the County's Public Safety RING Project. While we support the goal of interoperable communications, we must emphasize that this should not come at the expense of our communities, particularly those most vulnerable.

First, we are deeply concerned about the projected financial impact on the Fire Districts. The anticipated annual contributions for radio services is forecasted to reach 8.5% of the 2030 budgets, seriously jeopardizing their fiscal health. This allocation may force critical resources away from essential fire services. We urge the Board to advocate for a fairer funding model or alternative revenue streams to support this project.

Additionally, service coverage under the RING Project is a pressing concern, especially in high-risk areas (e.g. Lompico, North Rodeo Gulch, North Branciforte, and upper Soquel San Jose Road). We advocate for a comprehensive review of the coverage maps to ensure our most at-risk populations are adequately protected.

The Fire Chiefs acknowledge that more work is needed on the funding formula, cost allocation, governance, and agreements regarding system usage. Our hesitance to fully support this project stems from commitments from the County being verbal and from estimates based on unverified radio inventories. For instance, the Subscriber Agreement referenced in the Staff Report is still unwritten, and the allocation of radios remains unconfirmed among participating agencies. Without clarity on these points, we cannot take a definitive stance on the project.

We appreciate the Board's dedication to public safety and your commitment to addressing our concerns. Together, we can ensure the RING Project serves as a valuable resource while maintaining fiscal responsibility and meeting the needs of all communities.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. We look forward to working collaboratively toward a solution that enhances public safety throughout Santa Cruz County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Nee", is written over a horizontal line.

Jason Nee, Vice President

*Servicing Santa Cruz County Fire Agencies
Ben Lomond Fire Protection District, Boulder Creek Fire Protection District, CAL FIRE, Central Fire District of Santa Cruz County, Felton Fire Protection District, Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District, Santa Cruz City Fire Department, Santa Cruz County Fire Department, Scotts Valley Fire Protection District, Zayante Fire Protection District*

