



SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Board of Education

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Clint Harwick, Ed.D.
Superintendent

July 7, 2011

Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Members of the Orange County Grand Jury:

On behalf of Dr. Clint Harwick, Superintendent of the Saddleback Valley Unified School District, the response to the findings and recommendations of the Orange County Grand Jury report, "**Orange County Public Schools: Are They Prepared for Emergencies,**" is respectfully submitted in compliance with Penal Code 933.05(a) and (b).

The District appreciates and supports the efforts of the Grand Jury in order to ensure a safe environment for all students, staff members, and parents in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District and throughout Orange County. Emergency preparedness continues to be a top priority in our District.

Sincerely,

Frank Manzo
Safety Officer/Emergency Manager

SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT

July 2011

ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS: ARE THEY PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES?

RESPONSE SUMMARY FROM THE SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

In accordance with California Penal Code section 933.05, a response is required from the Saddleback Valley Unified School District to Findings 1-7 and Recommendations 1-5.

Findings

Finding 1:

With respect to reported constraints on emergency planning and preparation, over half of schools and almost three quarters of districts identified either limited time or funds.

The District agrees with the finding that indicates limited time and funding impacts emergency preparation. Significant cuts in personnel and programs have occurred each year over the past several years and with more resources, the District would be able to move forward with emergency planning and preparation. However within the present state funding constraints, the District conducts emergency drills, reviewing/updating practices and procedures, mini training sessions, limited equipment purchases, and ongoing collaboration with school districts, jurisdictions, and agencies.

Finding 2:

Six (of 17) school districts have managed to apply for and receive relatively large grants from governmental agencies to greatly enhance their emergency planning efforts, while others have not.

The District agrees with the finding that some districts have secured grants for emergency preparation and planning and school districts should seek grant funding. Allocation of staff time to pursue grant funding is limited due to the ongoing budget cuts and increased workloads for the remaining staff as personnel and positions are eliminated. The existing federal grant program will be phasing out in 2012 and other grant programs will need to be identified.

Finding 3:

Some schools anticipate responding to only a few emergency situations (e.g., earthquake and fire), while others have developed plans to respond to over a dozen different threatening situations.

The District disagrees with the finding that emergency plans have been developed for only a few emergency situations in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District. Presently the District has identified 17 different hazards and developed an immediate response handbook specifically designed for schools to address each of these hazards. Since the present District Emergency Plan is based on the SEMS (Standardized Emergency Management System), NIMS (National Incident Management System) and the ICS (Incident Command System) structure providing flexibility, expandability, and adaptability, the District and schools are able to respond to a wide range of hazards beyond the emergencies identified in the handbook.

Finding 4:

School districts develop plans with respect to a number of different but overlapping regulations and standards, including those required by the county, state, and the federal government.

The District agrees with the finding that overlapping regulations and standards do exist increasing the amount of staff time devoted to remaining in compliance with these requirements. The District plan was developed under Education Code and is in compliance with state and federal emergency management standards under SEMS and NIMS.

Finding 5:

Some schools reported they have not adequately anticipated the needs of students taking prescription medications, or with specialized medical needs, in the event of some emergencies, such as an extended lockdown.

The District partially agrees with the finding. The present District Emergency Plan includes practice with evacuating students with special needs. Student data and medications are provided by the parents, stored at each school site, and transported to the evacuation area during drills. The District agrees that this issue should be addressed to ensure that the needs of all students are met during an emergency.

Finding 6:

School districts are in communication with a variety of local and county departments, agencies, and systems to help them prepare for and respond to disasters or emergencies; not all districts access the same resources.

The District agrees with the findings that a wide variety of local and county departments, agencies, and systems assist districts with emergency preparation and not all districts access the same resources. Different Districts communicate in a variety of ways with first responders, local agencies, and other agencies to support matters of emergency management.

Finding 7:

Few schools have plans or emergency preparation information available in languages other than English.

The District agrees with the finding that few schools have emergency plan or emergency preparation information available in languages other than English and will address the availability of information in the fall of the 2011/12 school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Those districts which have yet to identify disaster grant opportunities, especially from governmental agencies, investigate the availability of potential resources. Forming inter-district collaboratives, learning from districts in the county that have been successful, pooling resources, and asking for consultation from the Orange County Superintendent of Schools/OCDE may help in these efforts.

The District will identify disaster grant opportunities from public and private agencies with the goal of enhancing the emergency planning and preparation efforts for all the SVUSD schools. These grant opportunities will be investigated on an ongoing basis starting with the 2011/12 school year.

Presently, the District has implemented the recommendation through routine involvement in collaborative efforts with a variety of agencies and jurisdictions facilitating the sharing of information, strategies, resources, and mutual support for programs, events, and activities. These emergency partners include but are not limited to the Orange County Fire Authority, Orange County Sheriff's Department, Newport Beach Police Department, Orange County Emergency Operations Center, Capistrano Unified School District, Tustin Unified School District, Irvine Unified School District, Orange County Department of Education, the cities of Lake Forest, Laguna Hills, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, unincorporated Orange County, water districts, O'Neill Park rangers, and American Red Cross. In addition, District representatives have attended workshops and conferences conducted by Homeland Security and Orange County Emergency Management Organization. The District was actively involved in developing a county MOU for student transportation to utilize school buses throughout the county in the event of an emergency requiring an exceptionally large number of vehicles.

The District has a long standing, positive working relationship with the Orange County Fire Authority and Orange County Sheriff's Department. Emergency plans are developed collaboratively with these agencies and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure accuracy, compliance, and effectiveness with current trends and practices. From the School Resource Officers and firefighters to the battalion chiefs and captain of South County Operations, an ongoing dialogue takes place to ensure a safe, well executed emergency response. The two way exchange of information is invaluable in the overall implementation of the District emergency plan.

Recommendation 2:

Districts review their plans, and the plans specific to each of their campuses, with respect to emergencies or possible disaster situations they have not anticipated.

Each of our school sites has a written safe school plan drafted and submitted by March 1st of each year. The plan is reviewed and updated annually.

The District has implemented the recommendation through the development of District and School Emergency Plans that are reviewed and updated annually. Both District and School Emergency Plans are developed based on SEMS and NIMS and the implementation of ICS to remain flexible, expandable, and adaptable in response to a wide range of emergency situations and/or multiple hazards. With the structure in place, situation analysis is then employed to develop a coordinated response to the specific hazard. Thus the plan can be deployed to the extent required to address the immediate and long range dangers. Each school is required to submit a School Emergency Plan with detailed information on job responsibilities, evacuation information, students and employee accountability procedures, and site safety tasks to be completed. This plan is reviewed at the start of each school year and practiced throughout the year in drills and exercises.

Although the District and school site plans are updated annually, procedures and practices are continually reviewed as new strategies, information, and/or policies become available. The close association with agencies and jurisdictions provides a steady flow of data to be integrated into the Emergency Plan. Similar in nature to any disaster, the Emergency Plan is designed to be dynamic allowing the plan to evolve and change as the event moves through the recovery stage.

The District developed specific procedures for responding to emergencies that have a higher probability of occurring at a school. The booklet, Events Requiring Immediate Crisis Response that was distributed to each teacher and administrator in the District, outlines the specific response to 17 different emergency situations. At the start of each school year, newly hired District teachers are required to attend a school safety presentation as part of the hiring process.

Recommendation 3:

Districts review their level of compliance with various existing codes, regulations, and liability insurance issues that pertain to emergency preparedness in public schools.

The District has implemented the recommendation by developing emergency plans in compliance with federal, state, and local emergency management agencies. The District is self insured as a member of a school district insurance coop that has sufficient liability coverage with respect to emergency preparedness. As the need arises, emergency plans

are updated to remain in compliance with various codes, regulations, and liability insurance issues that pertain to emergency preparedness.

Recommendation 4:

Districts review their plans, and the plans specific to each of their campuses, to ascertain whether the special medical and/or prescription medication needs of all students are adequately anticipated, especially during an extended disaster situation.

The District will expand the annual School Emergency Plan to include a process to determine the special medical and/or prescription medication needs of students and staff at each school. The strategies for meeting those needs will be an integral part of the District and School Emergency Plans in the fall of the 2011/12 school year.

Recommendation 5:

Districts survey their campuses with respect to the needs of non- or limited-English-speaking parents and guardians, and develop outlines or summaries of critical emergency planning information in Spanish, Vietnamese, and other threshold languages prevalent in their local communities.

The District will implement the recommendation by using the annual 2011/12 R-30 Language Survey, state regulations, and state mandates to identify the non-English speaking parent/guardian populations within the District. A summary of critical emergency planning information will be developed in Spanish and any other significant non-English languages populations identified in the local school communities as dictated by the state regulations and mandates. The 2011/12 R-30 Language Survey results typically arrive in September and the full implementation will take place in the fall of 2011.

The District will require further analysis of developing emergency preparedness information in Vietnamese due to the number of Vietnamese students in the District. Presently the Vietnamese population represents 1.1% of the total student population according to the 2010/11 R30 Language Report. As indicated previously, the R30 Language Report for the 2011/12 school year will be available in September and the need for publication of information in Vietnamese will be re-evaluated at that time.