

July 19, 2011

Thomas J. Borris
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT

ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS: ARE THEY PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES?

RESPONSE SUMMARY FROM THE FULLERTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

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.

Fullerton School District agrees with this finding. If school districts had more personnel and resources, districts would be able to move forward with emergency management planning. At present, limited State funds are available and a federal grant program to support emergency management planning will end in fiscal year 2012.

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.

Fullerton School District agrees that school districts should seek grant funding. In fact, our District benefited from a REMS (Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools) grant in 2008 to enhance emergency preparedness that included, but not limited to, the following items:

- Emergency Response Plan – expanded emergency procedures to include additional potential hazardous situations
- CERT Training for 20 school site leadership teams and two District Office teams
- Purchase of emergency supplies, First Responder Kits, water, and food bars for school sites

- Pandemic Response Training
- NIMS/ICS Training for all managers
- Translation of emergency information in Spanish and Korean to meet the needs of the non- and limited-English-speaking parents/guardians
- Establishment of a Crisis Response Team

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.

Fullerton School District agrees with this finding. Our District has developed emergency procedures for the following situations: civil disturbances, accident/injury/sudden illness, evacuation, biological hazard, motor vehicle, lockdown, bomb threat, explosion/hazardous materials or chemical spill, airplane crash, hostage situation/suspected terrorist/violent intruder, utility failure/building emergency/property damage or crime, earthquake, fire, weather, communications, Amtrak or Metrolink crash, dam breakage/flooding, and pandemic outbreak.

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.

Fullerton School District agrees with this finding. School districts have developed school safety plans as required by the Education Code. Schools districts are also required to comply with State and federal emergency management standards, the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Efforts should be made to make these requirements consistent with each other.

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.

Fullerton School District agrees that this issue should be addressed and the District is focusing on how to meet all student needs during any emergency situation.

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.

Fullerton School District agrees that different districts may access different resources. It is our understanding that 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.

Fullerton School District agrees with this finding. Our District has emergency information available in the following languages: Spanish and Korean.

Recommendation 1:

Those districts, which have yet to identify disaster grant opportunities, especially from governmental agencies, should 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.

Fullerton School District has received grants for emergency preparedness. The District was a recipient of the REMS (Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools) grant in 2008. In the future, our District intends to continue to implement this recommendation by researching and identifying disaster grant opportunities and investigating the availability of potential resources.

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 the Fullerton School District school sites has a written safe school plan, which is submitted by March 1st of each year that includes emergency response plans. In addition, Nutrition Services, and the District Office complex also have written emergency response plans. Each plan is reviewed and updated annually.

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.

Fullerton School District has implemented this recommendation by developing a school safety plan for each of its schools and working with federal, State, and local emergency management agencies.

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.

Fullerton School District is currently reviewing its plans with respect to the special medical and prescription medication needs of all students and is developing a plan to meet those needs, in the event of any emergency situation.

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.

Fullerton School District has not surveyed campuses with respect to the needs of non- or limited-English-speaking parents and guardians. As time permits, the District is interested in conducting a survey with School Site Councils and English Language Advisory Committees at each of its school sites and developing summaries of critical emergency planning information in Spanish and Korean to better meet the needs of non- or limited-English-speaking parents and guardians.

Cc: - Orange County Grand Jury