



# Capistrano Unified School District

*Excellence in Education*

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August 20, 2007

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Nancy Wieben Stock  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Honorable Judge Stock,

Pursuant to Penal Code 933.05, this letter is a response to the 2006 Grand Jury Report "Orange County Schools Disaster Plans: A Disaster Waiting to Happen?"

According to Exhibit 1 of the School Disaster Plan evaluation matrix, the following grading was given to Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD):

Capistrano Unified School District	Below Expected
Barcelona Hills Elementary School	Above Expected
Marco Forster Middle School	Above Expected
Capistrano Valley High School	Above Expected

Capistrano Unified School District supports the "above expected" findings for each of our school sites. Our district has worked hard to prepare each community for a potential emergency. In fact, the Orange County Sheriff's Department has critiqued all of our school safety plans and has done extensive Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) training for site-level administrative teams and staff. Each campus must not only submit a SEMS plan, but must implement a SEMS drill each year.

For these reasons, Capistrano Unified respectfully disagrees with the "below expected" overall findings of the Grand Jury report. Not only is the district a leader in school safety, but we have also been recognized as a national model. The "below expectation" grade misrepresents the capabilities and planning of CUSD.

The Grand Jury was presented with the attached exhibits concerning the district's accomplishments and track record prior to the submission of its final report. It is unfortunate that these findings did not present an accurate picture of the district's readiness.

Many agencies and safety experts have recognized CUSD as a leader in the area of emergency management. The Grand Jury examined only a snapshot of our



Nancy Wieben Stock  
August 20, 2007  
Page 2

extensive emergency preparedness program. Grand Jury Chairman J.T. Sanchez and the members of the Grand Jury were supplied voluminous evidence of Capistrano Unified's programs, but did not appear to use it in filing their report. We ask that you review the attached summary of CUSD's emergency preparedness programs in an effort to correct these findings.

Although the district fully acknowledges there is always room to grow and improve, we cannot support the Grand Jury's overall "below expectation" rating of our districtwide readiness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzette Lovely". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Suzette Lovely  
Acting Superintendent

SL:lp

**CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM  
August 2007**

**I. STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SEMS)**

The key to successfully managing a chaotic situation is a strong emergency management plan. For years, fire service and law enforcement have implemented the SEMS response to maintaining command and control of an emergency situation. Both district and site administrators have been trained on SEMS, and it is a required component of the CUSD School Safety Plan.

**School Site SEMS for Emergency Preparedness:** CUSD is preparing its 55 school sites to be self sufficient for 72 hours after a major natural or man-made disaster.

**District SEMS:** Similar to the emergency management structure utilized at the county level by Orange County Emergency Management. Supporting documentation available upon request.

**CUSD District-Level Emergency Operations Center:**

1. **Operations Center** (Exhibits A, B & C)
    - a. responsible for implementing strategy and gathering intelligence so the policy group can make informed decisions
    - b. planning; logistics; administration and operations (reference to the SEMS District Organizational Chart)
  
  2. **Policy Group** (Exhibit D)
    - a. creates the vision and strategies in responding to the crisis
    - b. comprised of superintendent and cabinet members who are responsible for making the command decisions such as site evacuations or closing schools
  
  3. **Support Group** (Exhibit E)
    - a. the CUSD hotline center
    - b. responsible for disseminating information via a phone system
- Pre-designated and trained groups, procedure binders provided to all personnel in EOC
  - People are cross trained so that they can work an alternative assignment if needed
  - Activated for table top training approximately 3-4 times per year
  - Participates in the SONGS drill, interacting with the County EOC, City EOC's and the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station

**II. OTHER EMERGENCY FUNCTIONS:**

- CUSD-the only school district to maintain a position in the County's Emergency Operations Center at Loma Ridge (Exhibit F)
- CUSD has been evaluated by FEMA evaluators during the SONGS graded exercise

### **III. CUSD's MOBILE COMMAND UNIT**

In the event of an emergency, this vehicle can be deployed to any school site in CUSD within a half hour. Exhibits G, H & I contain:

- Hard copies and CDS of the school safety plans
  - Maps and floor plans of all school sites and neighboring areas
  - Generator, lights, tables, chairs, and canopies
  - Mass casualty bags, water, bullhorns, and signs
1. The Mobile Command Unit is not meant to replace supplies that should be housed at the site.
  2. The team member(s) deployed with the mobile command are experts in safety/SEMS, with prior law enforcement experience.
  3. This team does not take over command from the principals, but supports administrators by guiding them through the crisis and working as a liaison with law enforcement/fire.

### **IV. COMMUNICATIONS**

During an emergency, schools may lose all land and cell phone accessibility. As a backup to landlines and cell phones:

1. CUSD will be using radios that run off four repeaters. The repeaters have backup to an electrical system through a generator and battery system.
2. A secondary backup system will be used to dispatch buses to the schools using bus radios.
3. Connect Ed automated telephone system will make the appropriate notifications to parents within minutes of a given emergency.

### **V. EMERGENCY RESPONSE CD**

Capistrano Unified School District developed a school safety CD for all CUSD schools. (Exhibit J). It contains vital information for site administrators, law enforcement and the fire department. It can be utilized in a variety of scenarios. The school safety CD contains the following information:

- General school information (address, etc.)
- Resource officer information
- Administrators' information (phone numbers/response time)
- Aerial photographs of the campus
- Campus maps with digital pictures of each area
- Hazardous storage information with digital pictures
- Bus routes (drop off/pickup locations and times)
- School communication/Alarm systems
- Building construction information
- Utility shutoffs
- Traffic and staging
- Staff information

## **VI. WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFE COMMUNITY**

**District Safety Meetings**—focus on the physical safety of our students, including parents, principals, law enforcement, health care workers, community members and district officials

**Monthly Child Welfare Council Meetings**—focus on social and emotional needs of students, including parents; a school board member; nurses; mental health community liaisons; site and district staff

**Inter-jurisdictional Planning Committee for SONGS**

**Orange County Emergency Management Organization (OCEMO)**

**Private Sector Terrorist Response Group (PSTRG)**

Annually, CUSD hosts a **School Safety Summit**, including city managers, city emergency coordinators, OCDE representatives, city police chiefs and SRO's, OCFA officials, SONGS representatives, and CUSD district leaders (Exhibit K).

## **VII. AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- **California School Board Association** awarded the CUSD Safety Program a **Golden Bell** (December 2006)
- **American Red Cross** presented CUSD with the **“Excellence in Disaster Preparedness Award”** (April 2006)
- **FEMA’s Region I Division Director**, Farley Howard, commended CUSD’s Emergency Operations Center (May 2007)

Mike Beekman, Executive Director, Safety and Student Services:

- Participated on a national focus group for the US Department of Education to write the curriculum for the **National Emergency Response Crisis Management Conference** (April 2005)
- Served as a speaker at the **Department of Education Emergency Response Crisis Management National Conference** (August 2007)
- Named **“School Administrator of the Year”** by the **California School Resource Officers Association**, (July 2007)