May 22, 2014

Dear CUSD Parents:

We appreciate the positive feedback and support from our families in the aftermath of the Poinsettia Fire. We understand how challenging (and scary) these events have been. It’s encouraging to see the community come together to support one another.

This week we have focused on getting students back into their normal school routines. Since the fire, we continue to review our emergency response procedures and evaluate “lessons learned” for process improvement and continuous safety of all involved. This includes meeting and debriefing with our site administrators as well as key members from the City of Carlsbad’s Emergency Response personnel.

We would like to share with you the rapidly changing chronology of events that took place on May 14th. This chronology has been established in conjunction with the police officers who were on scene and advising principals at the three schools that were evacuated - Aviara Oaks Elementary, Aviara Oaks Middle School and Poinsettia.

**Timeline of Events at Aviara Oaks & Poinsettia Schools – Wednesday, May 14, 2014:**

10:34 a.m. Rapidly moving fire breaks out on the south side of the Aviara Golf Course off Poinsettia Lane; the fire is moving in a northwesterly direction.

10:37 a.m. With the fire a much greater threat and closer to Poinsettia Elementary, School Resource Office, Malcom Warfield leaves Aviara Middle School for Poinsettia. Students at Poinsettia begin to shelter-in-place.

10:39 a.m. Officer Warfield contacts Aviara Oaks to inform the principal there is a fire. Aviara MS/ES students and staff are instructed to shelter-in-place.

Officer Fanene (SRO at CHS) is sent from Carlsbad High School to assist at Aviara.
10:49 a.m. Aviara Principals Harden and Arias see smoke in the vicinity of the Windsor Apartments. Per the current disaster plan, a staged evacuation begins – with middle school students moving to the front lawn of the elementary campus.

10:55 a.m. Officer Fanene arrives at Aviara Oaks. He is blocked from access to the school due to parents converging on the school.

Officer Fanene’s arrival is further delayed due to abandoned vehicles blocking the school driveway. This would have also delayed the fire department response, if needed.

11:00 a.m. Officer Warfield calls the District’s EOC and reports Poinsettia will need to evacuate. A decision is made by Officer Warfield and Principal Giordani to evacuate students to Carrillo Elementary in the San Marcos Unified School District rather than Kelly Elementary – to get behind the fire.

11:05 a.m. Most middle school students at AOMS had been relocated to the front of the elementary campus per a pre-designated evacuation plan. Because of State testing day, many students are not with their regular teachers which complicates the reunification process.

Elementary teachers prepare for evacuations from their classrooms.

11:20 a.m. Officer Fanene determines the pre-designated evacuation sites of Daybreak Church for AOE and Aviara Park for AOMS are unsuitable because these sites are located in the path of the fire.

Working with the City’s Incident Command Center, Officer Fanene determines students should evacuate on foot to the Sunrise Senior Living. In the confusion, it is reported to the District’s EOC that Aviara students will be evacuating to the Brighton Gardens Senior Center (which was purchased by Sunrise Living).

11:25 a.m. Students and staff from AOES/MS begin walking east on Aviara Pkwy. Buses are on standby from neighboring districts; however are unable to get into the area due to road closures and traffic.
12:30 p.m.  After an hour at the Sunrise Senior Center, the center self-evacuates. Based on the direction the fires, Officer Fanene directs the remaining 150+ staff/students to move to the La Costa Resort. In route, it is determined that Fire Station No. 2 at Arenal Road/El Camino Real is closer. A school bus waits at Fire Station 2 in case students are moved again.

1:08 p.m.  Police log indicates an officer on duty at the top of the hill near Ambrosia and Poinsettia Lane spotted flames heading south on Ambrosia toward the campus.

*** A total of 2,500 students are safely evacuated with no injuries and 100% re-unification.

**Your Thoughts/Input**

Many of you have expressed an interest in providing feedback and/or offering suggestions to enhance our emergency procedures and communication. To that end, we have set up the following dedicated email address Fires@carlsbadusd.net for parents to provide any thoughts or input. This information will be reviewed to assist us in refining our site/district plans accordingly. As with any emergency, our emergency operation plans are continuously re-evaluated to keep everyone safe.