



Homer-Center School District
District Administration Office
"Where Everybody is Somebody"

Homer-Center School District

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Dear Parents:

At 11:25 am on February 8th, we had a fire alarm activation at the elementary school. As students and staff were evacuating the building, our maintenance staff discovered that our electrical utilities room in the elementary was full of smoke. The Homer City Fire Department was dispatched and the elementary students and staff were directed to move to the high school gymnasium for sheltering. Once arriving in the high school gymnasium, the elementary teachers began accountability to assure all students had evacuated the elementary building and were safe.

The fire department quickly determined that no fire or immediate danger existed in the building. Penelec was notified of a major electrical issue at the elementary school and responded. Penelec opened the exterior transformer vault and found the fuses on the primary feed were blown and large amounts of soot on the secondary cables. Penelec began isolating the elementary building and preparing to remove the old transformer and install a new transformer.

Because of the lack of power and extensive work necessary to restore the power and other operational systems in the elementary, the crisis response team made the decision to move the elementary students and staff to the high school auditorium to house them and began to develop plans to feed all district students through the high school cafeteria. Once the school crisis team had gained pertinent information, secured a verified accountability of students, and had the plan to feed students in the high school, then our first parent notification was launched at 12:17 pm from a remote location because we had no phone or internet service in either building.

Once the first notification was launched, the school crisis response team met and discussed dismissal options for both high school and elementary students. The elementary school was safe, yet only emergency lighting was available. We knew we could safely get back to the elementary building for regular dismissal, students were fed, so we decided to house the elementary students and staff in the high school for the remainder of the day. This confirmation and dismissal announcement under normal procedures had been communicated by our system at 1:03 pm.

On Monday, February 11, our crisis response team met to debrief the incident. We discussed ways to improve our response for similar situations in the future. However, two things were cited as strengths: the quick actions of our elementary staff to evacuate the building to the shelter location and getting a quick accounting of all students to assure they were safe; as well as, attentiveness of our parents to resist the urge to report to the school to retrieve their children. Your cooperation and trust in us was critical for our response team to fully focus all attention to feeding, sheltering and dismissing students in an efficient and safe manner.

Thank you for the trust you place in us to educate and care for your children. It was through the collective efforts of all stakeholders our students were safe throughout the event.

Respectfully,

Charles J. Koren, Ed.D.
Superintendent