

Regional School District No. 14
Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury
News from Our Schools



September 28, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you know, Woodbury Middle School received a bomb threat on September 16th. Unfortunately, such threats are not uncommon in schools or other venues in which groups of people gather. Fortunately, this was only a threat. Schools and school systems plan for bomb threats in the same way we plan for fire and weather related emergencies. First, I want to emphasize that all threats are taken seriously by the faculty and staff of the Region 14 schools. There are a series of steps outlined in our Emergency Procedures Manual intended to maintain the safety of our students and staff. I thought this would be a good time to outline our procedures once a bomb threat has been received, what happens as the situation is being assessed and monitored by emergency personnel, and finally, what occurs once the situation has been determined safe.

Upon Learning of a Threat

- As stated previously, each threat is taken seriously. This includes those phoned in, those stated from one individual to another, and those threats made in writing.
- The recipient of the threat immediately notifies the building principal. The principal informs the Superintendent of Schools and the local police.
- The principal then conducts a fire drill and evacuates the building. Each teacher has an assigned area to bring his students and immediately takes attendance upon arrival. This "accountability sheet" is sent to the principal or assistant principal.
- Students remain with this teacher until classes resume or school is dismissed for the day.

During a Bomb Threat

- As students are leaving the building, fire and police have typically arrived or are arriving at the scene, as are the Superintendent of Schools and Director of Finance and Operations for Region 14.
- Police and fire personnel block off streets surrounding the school to prevent traffic from becoming a complicating factor.
- Once present, emergency personnel are considered in charge. We then take our direction from the police and fire officials.
- Police personnel evaluate the situation and determine if it is necessary to contact the State's Bomb Squad. It typically takes the Bomb Squad approximately thirty minutes to arrive on scene.

Procedural Details of this Incident

- In cases like the one on September 16th, teachers are then asked to move their students from the grounds of the middle school to the gym or cafeteria of Mitchell Elementary School, as outlined in our Emergency Plan for Woodbury Middle School.

- As it was then after 1:00 p.m., we knew we would follow our normal dismissal procedures, adjusting only from where students would board buses and the location of parent pick-up.
- At that time, an AlertNow call was made to parents informing them of the situation, assuring them that everyone was safe and accounted for, and asking that parents not attempt to come to school to take their child(ren) home.
- Teachers remained with their classes and other school staff assisted as directed by the principal and assistant principal.
- Just prior to dismissal, eighth grade students taking the bus were brought from the cafeteria to the gym, and sixth and seventh graders being picked up by their parents were accompanied to the cafeteria.
- Parent pick-ups were carried out in front of Mitchell Elementary School.
- Buses lined up on School Street and students exited the gym as their buses were called. They were escorted to their buses by a staff member.
- Upon arrival, the Bomb Squad, along with scent trained dogs, conducted a sweep of the middle school.
- Once they were confident the building was safe, staff was allowed back in the building at approximately 2:15 p.m.
- The middle school reopened and after school activities were held as usual.
- In the near future, school and emergency personnel will meet to review the events of the day, as well as the district's practices and procedures, as one way of continuously improving our services to our students.
- A final AlertNow call was made to let parents know that the building was found safe by emergency personnel and after school activities would continue as usual.

The staff and the students of Woodbury Middle School were remarkable in the way they conducted themselves throughout the ordeal. Students listened carefully, acted immediately and remained orderly, and never lost sight of the seriousness of the situation. They are a true source of pride for Region 14. I thank everyone for their efforts and I am confident that I would be saying the same thing if the situation had occurred in any of our schools.

This summarizes the steps we follow in the district when faced with a bomb threat, and some specifics of the recent incident. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or suggestions for improvement.

Sincerely,
Robert D. Cronin, Ph.D.
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 Superintendent of Schools