



# WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

40 Beecher Road – South  
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

Gaeton F. Stella, Ph.D. – Superintendent  
Sheila Haverkamp – Special Services Director | Alfred Pullo, Jr. – Director of Business Services/Operations

February 1, 2013

Dear Beecher Road School Families:

As you know, we had a delayed opening yesterday, not because of a power outage but because we were informed by the Woodbridge police, fire and highway officials that there were trees down on side roads due to the severe winds just before dawn. Beecher Road School had full power in the morning. Yesterday afternoon an emergency evacuation was required as a result of a power outage.

Whenever there is a power outage at school, all of the following systems stop functioning: (1) fire alarms, (2) telephone system, (3) public address system and (4) computer systems including our wireless system. In addition, there are no bathrooms in the building with windows. Without lighting there is a potential sanitation problem. In addition to the reasons listed above, the fire code requires the school to be evacuated within 90 minutes of a power outage.

When the power went down in the early afternoon, our emergency protocol took effect. United Illuminating was contacted to determine the extent of the black out. As soon as we learned that the outage would last for hours, our full protocol then went into effect. The bus owner/operators were notified. With the cooperation of the Amity school district, the intent was to have a bus pick-up at approximately 1:35 PM. Every one of our administrators and staff members knew their roles and responsibilities. Every student was issued an already prepared lanyard which they wore around their necks. Each lanyard had the child's name, bus number and list of adults who parents have designated as caretakers. Every child's lanyard was carefully checked to be certain that they got on the right bus.

An emergency evacuation is a whole school procedure that is time sensitive. All children must go on the bus including students who ordinarily don't ride the bus as well as those who attend extended day. The following steps were taken during yesterday's evacuation:

- Two staff members were assigned to each bus to assure children's safety and proper hand-off to the designated adult.
- Every child's lanyard was checked before they got on the bus.
- No student was allowed to leave the bus unless a designated adult was present at their home to receive them.
- All children, who could not be dropped off at their home, were brought to the Center Gym where administrators and staff members organized and implemented a detailed, monitored pick-up system.
- There was police support and cooperation every step of the way. Officer Lynch and State Trooper Merriam joined Anthony Taddei (a comforting and familiar staff member) at the entrance of Beecher Road School.
- Parents arriving at BRS were directed to wait for their children at home or pick them up at the Center Gym. This step was taken to assure that there were no interruptions with the evacuation procedure.

We can say the following about yesterday's evacuation:

1. Our main goal was achieved. All children were accounted for and cared for from the time they left BRS until they were delivered safely home or picked up by an authorized person from the Center Gym.
2. The administration and staff members demonstrated meticulous care for the children.
3. The boarding of buses at BRS took longer than expected due to the checking of lanyards to assure safety.
4. Because of the sharing of buses between Amity and BRS, yesterday's emergency resulted in a delayed pick-up for Amity High School and Middle School students. We extend our sincerest thanks to Dr. Brady and the Amity community for their cooperation and understanding during this emergency event. We apologize for any inconvenience.
5. There was cooperation and collaboration with the police and fire departments, bus owner/operators, the Amity school district and Town officials.

Here are some action steps that parents can take to support implementation of our safety protocols:

1. If you are not registered for *Instant Alert* do so now. Go to the district web site, [www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us](http://www.woodbridge.k12.ct.us) under *Parent Information*, find the link for *Instant Alert*, which will provide a full explanation of the system and instructions for registering. If you have any questions, contact Ms. Lola Johnson at [ljohnson@woodbridgeps.org](mailto:ljohnson@woodbridgeps.org) or 203-389-2195.
2. Be sure to update current information on *Instant Alert*. For example, an emergency evacuation is a **Red** alert. A school delay is an **Orange** alert. You may be signed up for one and not the other.
3. Follow the instructions above and sign-up for all alerts, using your preferred method of reception, e.g. cell phone, email, etc. Contact Ms. Johnson if you need assistance.
4. Be sure your child's lanyard has current information as to people you have designated for pick-up in emergency situations. To update your child's lanyard, contact their classroom teacher. If you have any questions about this topic, you may also contact office personnel at the school.

The District's Safety Committee, chaired by Principal Prisco, will meet early next week to analyze what went well with the evacuation as well as procedures that can be improved.

Considering when the emergency event occurred, I am extremely pleased with the way Mrs. Prisco, the administrative team and staff cared for our children and assured their safety. Deputy Police Chief, Ray Stuart, observing the evacuation, had this to say:

*"I am amazed how quickly all administrators and staff members went into action with such short notice. Everyone knew their roles and responsibilities. It was apparent from beginning to end that the safety of every child was the primary concern."*

We extend our thanks to our police department, including Officer Lynch and Sergeant Balch and State Trooper Merriam, for their hands-on support. We extend our thanks to all of our Beecher Road School families for your support and cooperation. Yesterday was not a practice drill; it was a real event for which we were prepared. While we always look for ways to improve our "protocols for safety," we sincerely appreciate the care that was demonstrated for our children.

You will receive on-going communications on safety and security matters from both my office and that of Principal Prisco. Enjoy the weekend!

Sincerely,



Gaeton F. Stella, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

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