



## **Emergency Communications Debrief for the Mill Valley School District Community**

**We would like to take this opportunity to debrief the most recent situation so you may best understand how we make decisions for school closures in the Mill Valley School District. Following are some Qs and As.**

If one school does not have power, do we close all schools or just that one?

- If there are half (3) or more of the schools in the Mill Valley School District without power, the district will likely close all schools.
- If less than half of the schools (2 schools) are without power, the district will likely be open and staff are to report to work. Students will not report to schools that are without power.
- If the Middle School is without power, the district will most likely be closed, as the middle school has the most students in the district and also houses the district office.
- These are our general guidelines and will be adjusted as needed on a case by case basis.

How may I get the quickest, most accurate, and up-to-date information?

- The first notification to be updated during crisis communications is our website message. When you open the browser, a pop up will give you the information. If your browser has been open, click the exclamation mark in the bottom right corner of the browser to refresh the update.
- Other platforms may take time to send messages out, but the website can be updated quickly and is always updated first by our team.
- It may take between 20-40 minutes to ensure all platforms are updated. Thank you for your patience.

Who makes these decisions?

- We have a team consisting of our Superintendent, Communications Specialist, Director of Maintenance, Assistant Superintendent, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

and Board, Marin County Office of Education leadership, and Local Law Enforcement and Safety.

- At 4 a.m. this morning, our Director of Maintenance and Operations visually inspected each site. One site (Tam Valley) was identified as having no power.
- Our Superintendent directed our team to commence the closure for that one site and communicate that all other sites were open.
- Our Communications Specialist began updating all platforms.

What will happen on the day following a school closure due to power outage?

- We will monitor the situation in the same manner.
- Any call for closure will not be made until 5:15 a.m. It is our goal to get kids back to school as quickly as possible. It is our hope that power will be restored overnight.
- If power is restored by 9:30 p.m. your update at that time will indicate that school is open.
- We will always operate under the assumption that school will be open until a final call is made at 5:15 a.m. on the day of school.

How will the instructional time my child lost be made up?

- We will submit an application to the California Department of Education to obtain approval for the waiver of attendance and instructional time on Wednesday and Thursday, October 9th and 10th, 2019. This waiver is only for approved emergency situations, and the days will not need to be made up.

Why can't our children attend school without power?

- Safety is our first priority. There are several factors that contribute to the safety related to our facilities. Our fire safety system, public address (PA) system, Internet and phones, and lighting for hallways and restrooms are all dependent on electricity. While we may be able to operate for a short time without one or more, the challenges are greater when all are unavailable.
- In the event that our fire safety system is out, we implement a "fire watch" protocol. A fire watch is a short-term emergency measure to provide an acceptable level of fire safety. A staff member must visually and physically monitor the site during an outage since there is no direct notification to the fire station through fire alarms.
- Teachers have hand held radios located in their emergency supplies within the classroom in the event our PA system is unavailable. These are dependent on batteries and not as reliable for ensuring full school messages are heard. The PA system is our way to quickly and efficiently alert staff to safety concerns.
- Some of our classrooms have fewer windows than others, and not all of our restrooms have windows for natural lighting. We must consider access of the entire facility.
- Our Internet and phones are dependent on electricity, and while we have an emergency line to dial out, we are unable to accept a large number of calls into the school on this

line. In the case of phones being out, we depend on the district office as a central communications station.

Why can't we use generators?

- Access to generators during widespread emergencies are limited. The generators run on diesel fuel, causing another layer of safety measures to be put in place. The power stations for some schools are directly outside classroom windows making it difficult for instruction to continue over the noise.

### **By the numbers**

Approximately 36 hours: The duration of this event.

14: Number of messages sent

4 hours: Average length between messages

4,034: Average number of individuals notified