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JUL 07 2011

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

July 1, 2011

The Honorable Vincent O'Neill, Jr.
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Ave
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Grand Jury Report Dated June 3, 2011 Concerning School Bus Safety

This letter provides the required response to the 2010-2011 Ventura County Grand Jury, Final Report on School Bus Safety dated June 3, 2011. I have included the District's response to each of the Findings and Recommendations contained in the report.

Ocean View School District (OVSD) agrees with the Grand Jury's finding that school bus travel in Ventura County is extremely safe. Based upon the national statistics presented in the report, school bus travel is the safest method of transportation when compared to trains, commercial aviation, and private passenger vehicles. The report also noted that the California Highway Patrol (CHP) is the governmental agency responsible for the supervision of the school pupil transportation industry, including investigating school bus accidents. The report states that data concerning all school bus accidents occurring within Ventura County is available from the CHP Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System.

Even though the Grand Jury report states that school bus travel is one of the safest methods of public transportation and that a database already exists to collect information about school bus accidents, it recommends that another data collection and reporting system be established for reporting school bus transportation statistics. OVSD respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury's recommendations proposed in the report.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this response, please contact me at 805-986-6702 or chelmstedter@oceanviewsd.org.

Sincerely,

Craig W. Helmstedter, Ed.D.,
Superintendent

cc: **Robert A. Peskay, Foreman, Ventura County Grand Jury**
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: *School Bus Safety*

Report Date: *June 3, 2011*

Response by: *Craig W. Helmstedter, Ed.D. Title: Superintendent*

FINDINGS

▪ I (we) agree with the findings numbered: FI-01, FI-02, FI-06, FI-07, FI-08

▪ I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: *FI-03, FI-04, FI-05*

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefore.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

▪ Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.

(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

▪ Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)


▪ Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.

(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)

▪ Recommendations numbered *R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04* will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: *July 1, 2011* Signed: _____



Paul H. Chatman, Board President

Number of pages attached: 3

**Response to Grand Jury Report
Statements to Findings and Recommendations
School Bus Safety**

FI-01 School transportation systems have been studied extensively at the national level, and that information indicates that school buses are one of the safest modes of transportation. (FA-01 through FA-04)

OVSD agrees with this Finding.

FI-02 Nationally, the majority of people killed in school transportation-related crashes are not school-age bus riders, but are occupants of other vehicles involved or pedestrians. Students are safer as passengers on school buses than they are a passengers in cars involved in crashes with school buses, or as pedestrians in school bus crashes. (FA-02)

OVSD agrees with this Finding.

FI-03 Not all districts maintain information on school bus safety statistics. Some districts do not track this information at all, while others rely on their contracted bus companies to do so. (FA-10)

OVSD disagrees with this statement because of its broad implications that school districts do not maintain appropriate school bus safety statistics in accordance with established law. OVSD maintains all school bus safety data required by law. Additionally, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) maintains information regarding school bus accidents.

FI-04 Due to the lack of comparable, consistent school bus safety statistics provided by the districts, it is not possible to determine objective measures of school bus safety, such as accident rates. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that school bus transportation in the County is safe, as previously demonstrated at the national level. It is only possible to infer that school bus transportation in the County is safe from the information provided by the districts. (FA-03, FA-10 through FA-13)

OVSD disagrees with this statement because of its broad implications that school districts do not maintain records in accordance with established law. OVSD maintains all school bus safety statistics that are required by law, and uses this information to evaluate the safety of Transportation Services in the District. Further, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) is required to investigate school bus accidents and has a database capable of tracking the accidents by county. Data are available to the public and can be used to make an educated conclusion regarding the safety of school bus travel in the county.

FI-05 School bus safety statistics, for districts or for individual schools, are not readily available to the public. (FA-09, FA-15 and FA-16)

OVSD disagrees with this statement. OVSD believes the public has access to and can obtain all the school bus accident and transportation program information that the CHP and District are mandated to collect and report.

FI-06 The efforts of the CHP, including certifying school bus drivers, investigating school bus accidents, and inspecting school buses, contribute significantly to ensuring school bus safety in California. However, the CHP does not collect information at the school district level. (FA-17 through FA-19).

OVSD agrees with this Finding.

FI-07 The Grand Jury was unable to identify any single local agency responsible for collecting, collating, and reporting County school-bus safety information on a countywide basis. (FA-14, FA-18, and FA-19)

OVSD agrees with this Finding.

FI-08 It is unclear whether seat belts on school buses significantly increase school bus safety. (FA-21, FI-25 through FA-28).

OVSD agrees with this Finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R-01 The VCOE should assume responsibility for the collection, collating, and reporting of County school bus safety information.

OVSD tracks critical school bus safety statistics and uses the information to evaluate Transportation Services within the District. Additionally, the California Highway Patrol is required to investigate all school bus accidents in the State of California. Establishing another database and data collection system would not provide additional useful information. As a result, OVSD will not implement this recommendation.

R-02 The VCOE should develop a standard form for the annual collection of school bus safety information from the districts. This information should include: the total number of students who ride the bus to and from school on a daily basis; the total number of students who are transported for field trips, special events, or athletic events; total miles ridden by students; and total number of school bus-related accidents and injuries resulting from those accidents

OVSD uses Governing Board approved forms and procedures for tracking and maintaining school bus safety statistics. Establishing another database, form and data collection system would not provide additional useful information. As a result, OVSD will not implement this recommendation.

R-03 The Districts should use the VCOE standard form recommended in R-02, above, to collect school bus safety information, report this information to the VCOE, and post it on district websites

OVSD uses Governing Board approved forms and procedures for tracking and maintaining school bus safety statistics. Establishing another database, form and data collection system would not provide additional useful information. As a result, OVSD will not implement this recommendation.

R-04 The VCOE should use the forms provided by the districts to collate school bus safety information for the County and post it on its website.

OVSD does not have the ability or authority to implement this recommendation.