

Ventura County Grand Jury 2011 - 2012



Final Report

Earthquake Safety in the Classroom

June 7, 2012

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Earthquake Safety in the Classroom

Summary

The 2011-2012 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) initiated this investigation into methods and systems for providing earthquake safety in Ventura County (County) classrooms based on a newspaper article in the Los Angeles Times. [Ref-01, Ref-02]

The Grand Jury requested information with respect to various safety programs from each of the school districts in the County and the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE). The Grand Jury also reviewed California law and performed internet searches for information related to earthquake safety in the classroom.

The Grand Jury examined the current status of safety programs in each of the school districts in the County and the VCOE. The main emphasis was earthquake safety in the classroom and the proactive strategies that can be taken to reduce potential injury in the school environment.

The Grand Jury requested information from all school districts in the County and the VCOE concerning the various safety programs that are in place in each school. The information requested included earthquake disaster plans, "duck and cover" drill reports, availability of emergency provisions and communication, medical equipment, and classroom inspection records.

The internet was searched for California Education Codes relating to earthquake preparedness and disaster plans.

Each district and the VCOE have a current Earthquake Disaster Plan (EDP) and a Comprehensive School Safety Plan (CSSP). The California Education Code requires schools to update plans annually.

Each plan requires the "duck and cover" drills each school quarter in elementary schools and at least once a semester in secondary schools. All schools, except Rio Elementary School District and Santa Paula Elementary School District, are conducting the required drills.

The Grand Jury recommends that all schools within the County comply with the required drills.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the American Red Cross, and the Ventura County Emergency Planning Council suggest that basic emergency supplies should include water and food for at least three days for each person. These recommendations have been followed by all school districts with the exception of Ojai Unified, Rio Elementary, and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts.

Ojai Unified, Santa Clara Elementary, and Rio Elementary School Districts should purchase and maintain sufficient food, water, communication equipment and medical provisions as recommended by the above organizations. All other districts should continue to maintain their emergency supplies and equipment.

Background

The Grand Jury initiated this investigation into Earthquake Safety in the Classroom based on a newspaper article pointing out that schools need to secure the interiors of their buildings.

The Los Angeles Times article entitled "2010 Mexicali Quake Still Shakes California" on earthquake safety stated:

"The 7.2 earthquake that rattled the U.S.-Mexico border in 2010 – the largest temblor to hit Southern California in nearly two decades exposed a hidden weakness in school seismic safety that officials are now trying to correct. . . .Strict laws mandate how buildings are built, but there are no regulations governing seismic safety inside them." [Ref-01, Ref-02]

Methodology

The Grand Jury requested information from all school districts in the County and the VCOE concerning the various safety programs that are in place in each school.

This same survey requested earthquake and safety records from these districts along with a current copy of their EDP and CSSP.

Facts

FA-01. Ventura County has 21 school districts.

- 11 Elementary – kindergarten through eighth grade
- 8 Unified – kindergarten through twelfth grade
- 2 High School – ninth through twelfth grade

[Ref-03]

FA-02. Ventura County has 211 schools comprised of 130 Elementary Schools, 28 Junior High/Middle Schools, 20 High Schools, 20 Alternative Schools, and 13 Charter Schools in the 21 public school districts. [Ref-03]

FA-03. The California Education Codes state the following:

- section 32281 states ". . . that all California public schools, in kindergarten, and grades 1 to 12 . . . develop a comprehensive school safety plan that addresses the safety concerns identified through a systematic planning process." [Ref-04]
- section 32282 states that "The comprehensive school safety plan shall include . . . an earthquake emergency procedure system The system shall include, a drop procedure whereby each pupil and staff member takes cover under a table or desk, dropping to his or her knees, with the head protected by the arms, and the back to the windows. A drop procedure practice shall be held at least once each school quarter in elementary schools and at least once a semester in

secondary schools.” It further states that the comprehensive school safety plan “shall be evaluated at least once a year.” [Ref-04]

- FA-04.** Briggs Elementary School District has 2 schools with a total of 555 students. The district practices “duck and cover” and has emergency provisions. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The district superintendent and the maintenance department monitor drills and inspect rooms. In addition, the Santa Paula Fire Department inspects school rooms.
- FA-05.** Conejo Valley Unified School District has 27 schools totaling 21,072 students. The district practices “duck and cover” and has emergency provisions for students for a couple of days. In addition each school has a radio transceiver for use if land lines and cell phones go down. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. Periodic comprehensive safety inspections from Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority (VCSSFA) are conducted at each school. The VCSSFA inspects all school rooms.
- FA-06.** Fillmore Unified School District has 7 schools totaling 3,774 students. The district conducts “duck and cover” drills once a quarter in their elementary schools and in high schools once a semester. They also have a limited supply of food and water and first aid supplies. Classrooms are inspected by school administration, custodial staff, local fire department and VCSSFA.
- FA-07.** Hueneme Elementary School District has 11 schools totaling 8,109 students. The district practices “duck and cover” and has emergency provisions. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The District Assistant Superintendent, school principals, District Facilities Director, VCSSFA, and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-08.** Mesa Union Elementary School District includes 3 schools with a total of 1,254 students. The district practices “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions for all students. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The District Superintendent, principals, and the VCSSFA monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-09.** Moorpark Unified School District has 12 schools with a total of 7,208 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions. Each school site has a cargo bin equipped with sufficient supplies to provide shelter, evacuation, first aid, and comfort for all students and staff. Sufficient water is stored at the sites in 325 gallon “water buffaloes.” They have regular inspections of the classrooms. District staff, VCSSFA, and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-10.** Mupu Elementary School District has 1 school with 137 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The principal, custodian, and school

secretary monitor drills and inspect school rooms. The local fire department and VCSSFA inspect school rooms on an annual basis.

- FA-11.** Oak Park Unified School District includes 7 schools with a total of 4,002 students. They indicated that they practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. District personnel, VCSSFA and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-12.** Ocean View Elementary School District has 4 schools totaling 2,519 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions for their students. Site principals monitor drills. The VCSSFA inspects rooms. The District Safety Committee, Assistant Superintendent-Business Services, Assistant Superintendent- Administrative Services, Superintendent, and the governing board, monitor drills and/or inspections.
- FA-13.** Ojai Unified School District (OUSD) has 9 schools with a total of 3,005 students. They practice “duck and cover.” They do not have emergency provisions, such as food, water, communications, or medical provisions for each school. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The District Superintendent, principals, maintenance personnel, and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-14.** Oxnard Elementary School District has 21 schools with a total of 15,870 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions for their students. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. Principals, VCSSFA, and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-15.** Oxnard Union High School District has 9 schools with a total of 16,642 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions for their students. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The district superintendent and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-16.** Pleasant Valley Elementary School District has 12 schools with a total of 7,262 students. The EDP and CSSP plans are revised on an annual basis. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The site principal and the local fire department monitor required drills and inspect school rooms.
- FA-17.** Rio Elementary School District has 8 schools with a total of 4,482 students. They practice “duck and cover.” Each school has “water, first aid kit and some rescue equipment.” They have regular inspections of the classrooms. School personnel and VCSSFA monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-18.** Santa Clara Elementary School District has 1 school with 55 students. They practice “duck and cover” each month. They have water, communications, and medical supplies for the students in case of an

emergency. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The District Superintendent and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.

- FA-19.** Santa Paula Elementary School District has 7 schools with a total of 3,661 students. Six of the seven schools are in compliance with the “duck and cover” requirement. Corrective action for compliance is being taken at the remaining school. All of the schools in the Santa Paula Elementary School District have emergency bins/containers on site. Items were missing and they are currently in the process of replacing the missing inventory. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The principals and assistant principals monitor the drills. Principals and assistant principals and maintenance personnel inspect each school room. The Santa Paula Fire Department inspects the schools on an annual basis. The district’s three Quality Education Investment Act schools are inspected by a representative from the VCOE on an annual basis.
- FA-20.** Santa Paula Union High School District has 2 schools with a total of 1,624 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions for their students. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. School personnel, VCSSFA, and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-21.** Simi Valley Unified School District has 29 schools with a total of 19,916 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. School personnel, VCSSFA, and the local fire department monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-22.** Somis Union Elementary School District has 2 schools with a total of 474 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions for their students. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The District Superintendent, Plant Manager, and the VCSSFA, monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-23.** Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) has 8 schools with a total of 2,375 students. They practice “duck and cover” and have emergency provisions. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. The VCSSFA and the Risk Manager monitor and inspect school rooms.
- FA-24.** Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) has 29 schools with a total of 17,492 students. They practice “duck and cover.” Each site has adequate medical supplies in the nurse’s office. Each site is responsible for evaluating, obtaining, storing, monitoring and restocking all other supplies. The District Office provides each site with recommended supply guidelines from sources such as FEMA and the American Red Cross and funding for these supplies. They have regular inspections of the classrooms. All sites are inspected annually by the VUSD Facilities Department, the Ventura County Fire Department and VCSSFA. Site principals schedule and monitor drills.

- FA-25.** The VCSSFA inspects public school districts in the County, with the exception of Santa Paula Elementary School District. They inspect each site on an annual basis. The larger districts such as Conejo Valley Unified, Simi Valley Unified and Ventura Unified take a longer time; about every eighteen months to inspect. They inspect for hazard identification. Recommendations and corrections are based upon state and federal occupational safety and health regulations, national building and fire codes, and other generally accepted safety practices and procedures.
- FA-26.** The Oxnard, Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Ventura Fire Departments inspect schools on a regular basis for compliance with safety codes. Inspections for compliance of safety codes are the same for businesses as they are for schools. Included in these inspections are fire extinguishers, fire alarms and fire sprinkler systems.
- FA-27.** The Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross and the Ventura County Emergency Planning Council suggest that basic emergency supplies should include water and food for at least three days for each person. [Ref-05]

Findings

- FI-01.** Each district and the VCOE have a current Earthquake Disaster Plan and a Comprehensive School Safety Plan. (FA-03–FA-24)
- FI-02.** Each EDP requires “duck and cover” drills be conducted each school quarter in elementary schools and at least once a semester in secondary schools. All schools are in compliance with this requirement, except Rio Elementary School District and Santa Paula Elementary School District. (FA-04–FA-24)
- FI-03.** Emergency provisions such as food, water, communications, and medical supplies are recommended for all schools. Ojai Unified School District, Santa Clara Elementary School District, and Rio Elementary School District are not in full compliance with this recommendation.(FA-04–FA-24, FA-27)
- FI-04.** Each school district and the VCOE indicated that they inspect school rooms on a regular basis for safety hazards. Inspections are conducted by school personnel, VCSSFA, and, at times, by the local fire department. (FA-04–FA-26)
- FI-05.** School drills are monitored by school personnel and, at times, by VCOE and/or the local fire department. (FA-04–FA-26)

Recommendations

- R-01.** School districts and the VCOE should continue to review and update their CSSP and EDP annually, as required by the California Education Code. (FI-01)

- R-02.** School districts should continue to conduct safety drills and safety inspections on a regular basis. (FI-01–FI-05)
- R-03.** Rio Elementary School District and Santa Paula Elementary School District should comply with drill requirements of their CSSP and EDP. (FI-01, FI-02)
- R-04.** Ojai Unified, Santa Clara Elementary, and Rio Elementary School Districts should purchase and maintain sufficient food, water, communication equipment and medical provisions as required. All other districts should continue to maintain their emergency supplies and equipment. (FI-03)

Responses

Responses Required From:

County Board of Education, Ventura County Office of Education
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02)

Board of Trustees, Briggs Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Education, Conejo Valley Unified School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Education, Fillmore Unified School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Hueneme Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Mesa Union Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Education, Moorpark Unified School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Mupu Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Education, Oak Park Unified School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Governing Board, Ocean View Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Education, Ojai Unified School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Oxnard Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Oxnard Union High School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Pleasant Valley Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Rio Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Santa Clara Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Santa Paula Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Santa Paula Union High School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04)

Board of Education, Simi Valley Unified School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Trustees, Somis Union Elementary School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

Board of Education, Ventura Unified School District
(FI-01, FI-02, FI-03, FI-04, FI-05) (R-01, R-02, R-04)

References

Ref-01. Lin, Rong-Gong and Allen, Sam. "2010 Mexicali quake still shakes California," *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2011.
<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/11/local/la-me-school-quake-20111011> (accessed December 28, 2011)

Ref-02. Ventura Office of Education, "2011 – 2012 Ventura County Public Schools Directory" <http://schooldirectory.vcoe.org/directory.pdf>
(accessed February 8, 2012)

Ref-03. California Emergency Management Agency, "Guide and Checklist for Nonstructural Earthquake Hazards in California Schools", January 2011.

Ref-04. California Education Code, sections 32281, 32282.
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=edc&group=32001-33000&file=32280-32289>
(accessed April 9, 2012)

Ref-05. FEMA, "Earthquake Safety Check list" FEMA B-526, March 2010.
http://search.fema.gov/search?q=schools+earthquake+supplies&sort=date%3AD%3AL%3Ad1&output=xml_no_dtd&oe=UTF-8&ie=UTF-8&client=fema&proxystylesheet=fema&entqr=3&entsp=a_FEMA_news&ud=1&site=fema (accessed April 20, 2012)

Glossary

TERM

DEFINITION

County	Ventura County
CSSP	Comprehensive School Safety Plan
Districts	School Districts in Ventura County
EDP	Earthquake Disaster Plan
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Grand Jury	2011-2012 Ventura County Grand Jury
OUSD	Ojai Unified School District
VCOE	Ventura County Office of Education
VCSSFA	Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority
VUSD	Ventura Unified School District
water buffalo	Large container manufactured from high-density polyethylene that holds 325 gallons of water