

MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHESTERVILLE – FARMINGTON – INDUSTRY – NEW SHARON – NEW VINEYARD – STARKS – TEMPLE – VIENNA – WELD – WILTON

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TO: Bus 15 Families
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent RSU #9
RE: Accident on 1-13-2025 - Update #2
DATE: 1-29-2025

My last update about the accident on the afternoon of January 13th, rather than explaining things, seems to have created more questions and it is clear that more information is needed. Thank you to those who brought these concerns to my attention. The following is an update on those questions:

- **Why did it take 30 minutes for some parents to be notified?**
 - The accident took place in an area of poor phone coverage. The driver's phone went in and out and we had to rely on the radio for communication between the bus driver and the Transportation Dept.. WE DO NOT SEND STUDENT NAMES OVER THE RADIO and so it took time to get the names of all students from our driver, look up the parental contact information for each student and to make the calls. Sometimes more than one number must be called before reaching a student's contact person. Naturally, when parents receive such a call, they have a lot of questions that can take time to answer. While staff worked as quickly as possible, this all takes time. As with other items in this memo, we are using the information gathered from the January 13th event to work on improving our procedures and expediting the contacting of parents. Working with the school directly on sharing the names of students who are on the particular bus will allow for the calls to happen more quickly and is being added to our procedures.
- **Why did it take so long for more detailed information about the accident to be sent out?**
 - Historically, it has not been the Transportation Department's practice to send out a written explanation after an accident. Fortunately, there have been very few accidents over the years and communication about them has not been a focus. It is clear that timely communication about any accidents needs to be part of a standard operating procedure for the families of the bus involved and we have changed our procedures. From now on a more detailed update will be shared within 48-72 hours of an accident occurring. That time delay gives us an opportunity to gather detailed information about the situation.
- **What do you mean we contact "County Emergency Management Services" to send assistance?**
 - Previously, as soon as we heard from a driver (by radio or cell phone) about an accident the Transportation Dept. contacted the Sheriff's Office (through dispatch) to let them know an accident had occurred. The dispatcher would then tell us what County's services were responsible for providing assistance and they then arranged for the help to be sent. Upon review and going forward our transportation dept office will now call 911 as we believe it will be faster and reduce any future confusion.

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- **How does a driver determine if evacuation is needed?**
 - Given that each accident is different, the circumstances of the event will determine what training on this topic might take place with all drivers. If there isn't smoke, a gas smell, or the bus isn't in the middle of the road or some other location that would put the students at risk if they stayed on board, everyone is to stay on the bus so that students are not put in danger by getting off a bus near or on a road. The fact that the bus was on the side of the road on January 13th and at an angle is not something we have dealt with before. We are reviewing our procedures for future such events accordingly.
- **Why did the school secretary not hear quickly about the accident?**
 - As shared because of where the accident happened cellphone service was difficult. The school was contacted shortly after the Transportation Dept received the call from the driver about the accident. Before that info could be relayed to both the CCHS Principal and CCHS School Secretary people were already calling the school.
- **Why weren't paramedics automatically sent to the accident?**
 - Upon further review we found that we incorrectly asked specifically for the police to be sent to the accident when we called the Sheriff's Dept. and did not state that an accident occurred. If we had told them that the bus was involved in an accident they would have dispatched more assistance, such as fire and paramedics. Changing our procedures to calling 911 rather than Dispatch will help with this. We have also prepared a statement of what is to be said when calling in an accident to ensure all pertinent information is covered.
- **Why does the distance from the Transportation Garage determine if more help is needed?**
 - With previous accidents we have been able to get to the site quickly to help the driver and assist with other needs. While the Transportation staff will continue to provide additional support by heading to the scene of the accident, should an accident occur, calling 911 and providing a thorough assessment of the situation should facilitate necessary assistance being sent immediately.

Both Director Joseph and I take responsibility for the errors that were made. We are taking this very seriously and, as mentioned throughout this memo, we are using the January 13th accident to immediately review and update our procedures and improve our ability to deal with future situations and ensure that our mistakes are not repeated.