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Oct. 22, 2015

Los Rios Releases Report on Response to Sept. 3 Shooting at SCC

SACRAMENTO – Sacramento City College and the Los Rios Community College District’s difficulties with an emergency warning system resulted in an “unacceptable” delay in alerting SCC students, staff and faculty that a shooting had occurred on campus, according to an independent, external review of the response to the September 3 incident.

Even so, the review concluded that the delay – caused by human error and lack of practice and familiarity with the warning system – “contributed to nothing more than uncertainty relative to this incident.”

The report confirms that, overall, Los Rios and SCC have a solid emergency response structure in place, that preparation, training and the response plan itself are “more than acceptable,” and that the performance of SCC staff, faculty and students was “predictably chaotic” but “acceptable” in response to the tragic shooting incident that left one man dead. A copy of the report is available at <http://www.losrios.edu/downloads/press/FinalLRCCDSCCIncidentAssessment.pdf>.

The report also praises the Los Rios Police Department’s response that afternoon as “appropriate, expedient, professional and executed with a sense of purpose.”

“The District is pleased with the findings related to its preparation and response, and we look forward to reviewing the recommendations as a District to determine what ways we might improve our preparations and response in the future,” said Chancellor Brian King.

“The report’s findings reinforce our belief at Los Rios that campus safety and security is everyone’s responsibility,” King added. “And when our students, staff and faculty take this responsibility seriously, we create an environment that fosters teaching and learning.”

The report acknowledges that the Los Rios Police, the District and its colleges regularly offer many opportunities for staff and faculty to be trained in emergency and crisis response, including active shooter scenarios. But, the report expresses concern that not enough people appear to be aware of or take advantage of this training. In response, the District in the coming weeks will place an increased

emphasis on promoting and offering training classes, to ensure that more staff and faculty enroll in and take advantage of these opportunities.

“We need everyone to embrace the concept that campus safety and security is a shared responsibility,” said Los Rios Police Chief Cheryl Sears. “We all have a personal obligation to train so that we know how our plan works, what to do and when to do it.”

The report also recommends that the District examine its emergency alert system to determine whether there are alternatives that can seamlessly and fully integrate our communications across all platforms using remote and mobile technology.

King pointed out that members of the District and college staffs with the responsibility for preparing and issuing these alerts have already increased their own training and practice and will be able to issue these alerts more quickly in the future.

“The finding of an ‘unacceptable’ delay in the SCC warning message is disappointing,” King said, “but the staff responsible for preparing and distributing such messages will be ready, willing and able to issue such alerts more quickly in the future.”

“Los Rios is committed to ensuring that our emergency plans and protocols are effective,” Sears added. “And for them to be effective, these plans and protocols must be widely shared and easily understood, practiced and revised on a regular basis and – when necessary – implemented with speed and purpose.”

The report concluded that Sacramento City College was not the target of an attack on September 3. Two SCC students were departing class on campus when two other persons who were not students confronted them. Soon after, a fight began and then ended quickly with gunshots.

In a message to the Los Rios community on September 9, King wrote, “We owe it to the Los Rios community to conduct an independent review of what happened and consider recommendations to strengthen our preparation for possible future incidents as we move forward together.”

As for next steps, the District’s Preparedness Assessment Team (PAT) will review and make recommendations on the findings of the independent review at its next regularly scheduled meeting on November 4.

The District created the team in fall 2007 to provide continuous oversight of the District’s state of emergency preparedness by assessing current capabilities and projecting future needs. The team meets regularly to review district efforts, discuss new and continuing initiatives, and make recommendations on future needs.

Mike Rayfield, a consultant and retired FBI special agent, prepared the report. Rayfield has significant experience in tactical response and investigation of workplace and school shootings. His consulting firm provides training on prevention and response to these situations.

ABOUT LOS RIOS

The Los Rios Community College District is one of the nation's most respected learning institutions and the second-largest community college district in California, serving the greater Sacramento region. Los Rios includes: American River, Cosumnes River, Folsom Lake and Sacramento City colleges; six major education and outreach centers; and specialized workforce and economic development programs, for regional businesses, governments and organizations. The Los Rios Colleges offer AA/AS degrees, certificates and transfer-education opportunities in more than 70 career fields. The District's 2,400 square-mile service area includes all of Sacramento County, most of El Dorado County and parts of Yolo, Placer and Solano counties. About 77,000 students are enrolled in the four Los Rios Colleges. For more information, go to www.losrios.edu.