

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lum Elementary Soil Found to be Vulnerable to Liquefaction

Alameda – April 26, 2017 - Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) officials told family and staff at Lum Elementary School today that structural engineers have determined that the school cannot be guaranteed to be safe for long-term continued use because the soil on which it was built has been found to be susceptible to liquefaction in the event of an earthquake.

The risk was discovered just recently as the district was preparing to build a new classroom building on the Lum campus. Tests at the school indicate that during a strong earthquake the soils would be subject to liquefaction (a process by which sandy or silty soils lose their strength during strong ground shaking and behave like a liquid). The structural engineer subsequently determined the building could sink as much as 5 inches in a 100-year earthquake and become structurally unsafe.

The district then ordered five more samples to be taken from around the Lum campus. Each sample came back with similar results, causing concern for the existing campus buildings. As a result, the engineers have recommended that “the district develop a plan to provide suitable alternate facilities for the students as soon as feasible.”

A special Board of Education meeting has been scheduled for this Friday, April 28, at 6:30 pm so that the board and community members can learn more about the situation. District staff will be recommending that Lum Elementary School be closed at the end of this school year and that Lum students be enrolled in other, nearby school sites to protect their safety.

“I know this is terrible news to hear,” Superintendent Sean McPhetridge said “Our schools are our communities, and Lum Elementary School is a fabulous community. But as staff we will be recommending to the board that we close the site in 2017-18 due to our concern for the safety of students and staff.”

Added Board President Gary Lym, “We are fully committed to doing everything in our power to make this process of fact-finding, community engagement, and decision-making as smooth as possible.”

Peer review of the findings have confirmed that the Lum soil could be subject to liquefaction. Geotechnical engineers have tested the soil at several other AUSD campuses and found that earthquake-induced settlements do not pose safety concerns at those sites.

“I have seen this community pull together time and time again to take care of each other,” McPhetridge said. “If we all work together and support each other, I know we can get through this. We must work together deliberately and thoughtfully to face this challenge, and we must cooperate and coordinate our actions going forward to take care of our community and the Lum Elementary School families we serve.”

The district has set up a website with more detailed information on the issue [here](#) and will be adding to it over the next several weeks.

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