March 27, 2023

Fire Alerts

Dear Members of the Blind Brook Community,

Last week was a tough week in the District for fire-related issues. I want to assure the community that there was no danger to our students and staff during any of these events. The purpose of this email is to explain what happened at each event and what we are doing to prevent it from happening again.

On Tuesday afternoon a vacuum pump that was connected to the laser engraver that is housed in the FabLab at the Blind Brook Middle School/High School building stopped working. The purpose of this pump is to remove the air from space around where the laser is operating so that a fire cannot get started. Due to the malfunction of the pump, there was a small fire that started inside the cutting bed of the engraver. Our FabLab Manager immediately evacuated the room, shut down the machine and extinguished the flames. The fire department was contacted to inspect the space and found no danger to reoccupation. The engraver was taken out of service in order to be cleaned, inspected and have a replacement pump installed.

At 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning the fire alarm at the Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School activated. The building was evacuated and the fire department came. It was found that the alarm was set off by the smoldering of the residue in the bottom of a toaster oven in our Business Office. There was no actual fire during this event. The toaster oven has since been cleaned and will be maintained moving forward.

On Wednesday afternoon, a fire broke out during the operation of the Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) machine located in the Middle School/High School FabLab. The CNC is a large scale cutting machine that carves away at a block of material to provide a computer designed shape. The carving results in a great deal of debris, such as sawdust when cutting wood. This debris is pulled away from the cutting area by a vacuum system and deposited in a collection bag. During this particular run of the machine, it appears that some of the debris heated up and was then sucked into the collection bag. A fire then started in the bag and smoke began to fill the space. Our District staff cleared the area, vacated the building and alerted the fire department. They were able to extinguish the fire before the fire department came and removed the collection bag from the room.

While I am glad that no one was hurt and damage was minimal, I and the administration are concerned that these events took place and are taking steps to make sure that the FabLab is safe and no additional incidents occur. The FabLab is currently out of service and will continue to be until it has been determined that it is safe to reoccupy. Our personnel worked with the Rye Brook Fire and Police Departments to determine the cause of the fire and discussed additional preventative measures to take. We are bringing in consultants to review all aspects of the room to make sure that everything is functional and safe.

It is always scary when a fire breaks out in a school building. Please know that our number one priority is to provide a safe environment for everyone who comes into our buildings. We will continually work to meet this goal.

Sincerely,

Dr. Colin M. Byrne
Superintendent of Schools