



Tippecanoe School Corporation

21 Elston Road
Lafayette, Indiana 47909-2899

TSC offers these comments to the press and public as an update on events surrounding the science lab accident which occurred at Wainwright Middle School on November 18, 2009.

The incident involved a very unusual and unexpected fire as part of an eighth grade science teacher's lab demonstration. The flash fire resulted in direct burns to two students, serious burn injuries to one of the students, and burns to the teacher as he responded to the fire and assisted the injured student.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those involved in the accident, including especially the eighth grader recovering from serious burns, the other student, and the science teacher injured as he responded to the accident.

We appreciate the excellent efforts of all who responded to this terrible accident, from the classroom teachers, students and school administrators to the fire and emergency responders, sheriff deputies, medical folks and investigators who helped TSC with a prompt, professional and effective response to these events.

The fire was an unexpected, accidental result of a familiar science lab procedure as part of the teacher's normal eighth grade science curriculum. The same science lab demonstration had been performed by this teacher numerous times over several years, and twice earlier the same day in the same room, all without any such adverse incident.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff has completed an investigation and has provided TSC with a thorough report. The Sheriff's 27 page Incident/Investigation Report includes the results of numerous witness interviews, collection of physical evidence and photos at the scene, analysis, and some expert consultation. The report was sent to the County Prosecutor for review and according to the report no criminal charges will be pursued against anyone in this case. The Sheriff has closed his investigation.

Capitalizing on all available resources, TSC also referred the matter to its insurance carrier for investigation. And TSC's own investigation and responses to the incident are continuing. Among other things, TSC is investigating and evaluating the values and risks, the pros and cons, of the lab, safety and security procedures used here and of related elements of the TSC science curriculum. We expect TSC will learn from these events and for the time being, TSC teachers will not be conducting demonstrations of this type.

We are pleased to report that the injured students are recovering well so far. One was treated and released at a local hospital on the day of the accident. The other, more seriously burned student was in critical condition for a time at an Indianapolis hospital. We understand he has been released from the hospital now and is at home. We join the families in hope for continued healing and recovery. TSC hopes everyone will respect the family's privacy.

We ask that inquiries to TSC concerning these matters be directed to the Superintendent, Dr. Scott D. Hanback, TSC Central Office, 21 Elston Road, Lafayette, IN, 47909, 765-474-2481.