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## **Bomb Threat at Happy Valley School Diffused**

*By Cathy Tyson*

Despite the occasional car break in, many Lafayette residents feel that their little community is removed from big city problems. That bubble was promptly burst at approximately 6 p.m. on Dec. 1 when the Lafayette Police Department received a phoned-in bomb threat targeting Happy Valley Elementary School.

Lafayette police carefully inspected the campus following the threat. Children and their coaches participating in an after-school activity were evacuated. Nothing was found at this campus, or at other school locations in Lafayette.

According to police chief Eric Christensen, an unidentified caller gave an erroneous school name to Walnut Creek dispatchers, but had the correct address for Happy Valley Elementary School.

Superintendent of the Lafayette School District, Rachel Zinn, said that the current investigation has it narrowed down to a "robo" call that came from outside of the area. Zinn credits the district's partnership with Lafayette police as "wonderful" and praised the department for its immediate response.

Out of an abundance of caution, police were back early the next morning along with a bomb sniffing dog. After scouring the classrooms and campus again, they found nothing. There was a police presence at the other schools in the district, as well as a school psychologist who was available to talk with students, staff and parents.

"We would never compromise student safety. We were absolutely confident there was nothing there," said Zinn. Although parents were understandably a bit anxious, school was in session the next day.

Zinn was quick to compliment police training and preparedness, and noted the experience has definitely heightened safety awareness at the district.

The police chief responded to questions about why the bomb squad was not on campus in a recent online Crime Bulletin: "The bomb squad does not search for devices - they deactivate devices once they are found."

Both the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms are investigating the matter.

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