

**CURRENT WEATHER**

 Click here for five-day  
 forecast for Oakhurst, CA

 Partly sunny  
 50F

 Powered by  
 AccuWeather.com

 Advertise on SierraStar.com  
 Click here to find out more!

**COLUMNISTS**
[Paul Henry Abram](#)
[Ronna Adler](#)
[Judith Allender](#)
[Dr. Bill Atwood](#)
[Dwight Barnes](#)
[Daniel Blodgett MD](#)
[Cathie Campbell](#)
[Tom Elias](#)
[Jim Flanagan](#)
[Elizabeth Gabriel](#)
[Grace Grady-Barnes](#)
[Bryan Greeson](#)
[Mike Hackworth](#)
[Al Joyal](#)
[Tony Krizan](#)
[Ed Lyons](#)
[David Richards](#)
[Earlene Ward](#)

## EDUCATION

### Local school and emergency officials ponder 'What if?'

 By [Elizabeth Gabriel](#)

(Updated Wednesday, February 14, 2007, 4:10 PM)

Madera County school and emergency officials join together for a session on safety Friday

What if a raging fire surrounds Yosemite High School?

What if a depressed student takes a gun to Coarsegold Elementary and opens fire on classmates?

What if a high-magnitude earthquake strikes, leaving students frightened and perhaps cut off from their homes?

Despite what we all want to believe, these things can happen here.

Representatives from Madera County schools and first responders -- fire, law enforcement, rescue, emergency services -- got together Friday at the Pines Resort in Bass Lake for a day-long session called "What If? ... Preparing Schools for the Unthinkable."

Presenters Hilda Quiroz and John Hayes of the National School Safety Center took the nearly 85 participants through multimedia presentations, mixed up the groups up and took them through exercises designed to present the main message: work together and be prepared.

Work together before there's a crisis, work together to develop a plan, work together to recognize problems while they're small.

"It's better to take care of a couple of kids arguing in the morning than it is to break up a fight involving 250 kids at the football game," said Hayes.

The day was designed to give people the tools to develop their crisis plans, not that the schools don't have plans already. But there was a twitter of recognition when a fellow in one film clip said "In 30 years in the military, I have rarely seen anyone reach for the plan."

Again and again, Hayes and Quiroz told participants that the best people to develop plans are the ones who will be there when the unthinkable happens.

"Bring in the partners," Quiroz said.

Each responder brings a different experience, a different perspective, and only in working together can they come up with the best plan possible, she said.

"We never know what we'll have to do in a crisis situation," Quiroz said, so preparedness is the best way to go.

Know whom to call, know who will be in charge, know where to go, what to lock up, what to say and what not to say, the presenters emphasized.

The presentation by Hayes, a lieutenant with the Seattle Police Department, and Quiroz, a former teacher, is funded by a grant from the Department of Justice and was coordinated by


 Hilda Quiroz of the National School Safety Center speaks to a crowd at the Pines Resort last week.  
 Photo by Elizabeth Gabriel

 Above  
 the Fog,  
 Just below  
 \$119 per n

 Just below the snow  
 on the shore of Bass  
 is your getaway to  
 Chalet at The Pine

 Enjoy a warm and c  
 Chalet for \$119 per r  
 (plus tax) that inclu  
 \$40 towards dinner  
 Ducey's on the Lal  
 and a welcome gi

 The Pines  
 RESORT  
 AND CONFERENCE CENT  
 Central California's  
 most popular mountain  
 www.basslake.e

 Subject to availabilit  
 December 1, 2006 thro  
 April 12, 2007.  
 Some restrictions app  
 Weekends and suite  
 also available.

MADERA WINE T



VISIT the WINE

 Subscribe  
 to the

 SIERRA  
 STAR

Yosemite Unified School District's Earlene Ward.

"It brought everybody together ... (and we all) heard the same thing," Ward said.

The plans now in place will be tuned up as a result of the workshop. Right now, the Yosemite district has a safe school plan that is made fresh each year after polling staff and students. And the National Incident Management System, developed by the Department of Homeland Security, sets forth guidelines.

Under NIMS, Ward said, positions of authority are three deep. If Steve Raupp, the man in charge at Yosemite High School, cannot complete the duty, there are two more people who can step in. It's that process the Mountain Area schools will be putting into place soon, Ward said.



Published every Wednesday!



Looking for Dining or Lodging? See what our mountain area has to offer. Download Mountain Menus!



CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO  
**True Value. HOMECENTER**  
**BIGGER & BETTER – NEW LOCATION**

[Home](#) - [News](#) - [Features](#) - [Calendar](#) - [Sports](#) - [Obituaries](#) - [Crime](#) - [Education](#) - [Announcements](#) - [Opinion](#)  
[Ads](#) - [Archives](#) - [Classifieds](#) - [Submissions](#) - [Subscriptions](#) - [Subscriber Services](#) - [Community Links](#) - [About](#)

**The Sierra Star**  
49165 Crane Valley Rd [426] | PO Box 305 | Oakhurst, CA 93644-8621  
Phone (559) 683-4464 | Fax (559) 683-8102

Copyright © 2007 The Sierra Star