

NEWS RELEASE

DATE: Thursday, February 20, 2020
For Immediate Release

CHEMAINUS SECONDARY FIRE BEING INVESTIGATED AS SUSPICIOUS

COWICHAN VALLEY, BC – The North Cowichan - Duncan RCMP and Fire inspectors have now confirmed to the District that this morning's fire at Chemainus Secondary is being investigated as suspicious.

At approximately 9:00 am the fire was noted on the second floor of the school, and the school was evacuated. Students and staff were left outside as the Chemainus, Crofton, and Ladysmith Fire Departments contained and put out the blaze.

Due to the large amount of smoke still present, it wasn't until later in the day that the RCMP and Fire Inspectors could check out the location of the fire. It was then that they determined that the fire was suspicious.

Classes were cancelled and students were sent home for the day. Due to the ongoing investigation and damage the school is closed on Friday, February 21 as well. Information on the collection of personal belongings from the school will be sent out by the District once a process is determined.

"While I'm concerned that this fire may have been deliberately set, I'm grateful that our students and staff were able to make it out of the building safely," said Robyn Gray, Superintendent of the Cowichan Valley School District. "I am also extremely grateful for the quick response of our local community fire departments. My thanks to both the Chemainus Crofton, and Ladysmith Fire Departments. As for the investigation, we will assist the RCMP where we can in order to get answers and closure on this event."

"Police attended Chemainus Secondary School this morning upon learning about the fire in the building," says A/Cpl. Dave STARR of North Cowichan Duncan RCMP. "The fire, which was started in a student bathroom, has been extinguished and is currently considered suspicious. We are working with the school board and the local fire department to establish how and why this occurred, and who was involved. We would also like to commend the quick actions of staff at the school and the fire department in ensuring that all students and others in the school were evacuated safely."

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