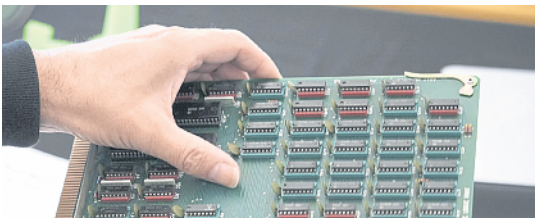


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SAN JOSE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Broken trust: Parents report rocky transition



Gio Naughton, 7, and his mother, Maeve Naughton, sit on a bench at Gio's old school, Terrell Elementary, while waiting for a school bus to take him to his new school Friday. **PHOTOS BY DAI SUGANO — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

When it closed five schools, officials promised transit, help amid changes

By Molly Gibbs
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When San Jose Unified School District decided to shutter five elementary schools this year, it promised transportation, priority in the transfer process and careful coordination for families displaced by the closures.

But as students returned to class last week, some parents encountered transportation and communication problems that deepened their mistrust of the district.

Students from closing schools who live outside the 1.5-mile walk zone of their newly assigned campuses were told they would receive bus transportation for the remainder of their elementary school years, subject to annual review by the district's school board.

The guarantee did not extend to students who transferred to another campus.

Jenna Minter said when the district voted to close Terrell Elementary School, she had 12 days to choose between sending her first- and fourth-grade children to their newly assigned school, Rachel Carson Elementary School, or requesting a transfer to another school.

Minter requested a transfer but ultimately decided to send her children to Rachel



In the parking lot of the closed Terrell Elementary school, Gio Naughton, 7, walks up to a school bus to take him to his new school on Friday in San Jose.

Carson because its start time aligned better with her work schedule. Although she chose their assigned school, Minter said applying for a transfer caused her to miss the deadline for priority busing. Her family lives 1.6 miles from Rachel Carson.

Minter said she was able to request busing over the summer and was alerted that her children's bus passes were available to pick up the day before the first day of school.

But when she picked up the passes, Minter realized they

were Valley Transportation Authority bus passes. After reviewing the route, she said her 6- and 9-year-old children would need to leave home an hour before school started to arrive on time.

"It was just mind-blowing," Minter said. "I'm not going to put my 6-year-old on public transportation, especially almost an hour before school starts."

Seth Reddy, the district's chief business officer, said last week that the district offers VTA passes to some

students, usually older ones, who live outside their schools' walk zones when the district does not have the resources to provide bus transportation. Reddy said families choose whether to request a VTA pass.

"It wouldn't just be like they were being assigned to a VTA pass and that's the only option that they have for transportation," Reddy said. "For our students that were affected by Schools of Tomorrow

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LAKE TAHOE DISASTER

Danger was high before avalanche

Report does not assign blame for ski trip that left 9 dead

By Ethan Baron
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Guides leading a backcountry-skiing group near Lake Tahoe knew avalanche danger was high, had observed warning signs in the snow and expected a brief break in a raging blizzard to "shut quickly" before a slide killed nine people in February, according to a new report commissioned by the guiding company.

The 56-page report by Blackbird Mountain Guides of Truckee, based on the company's own assessments and an analysis it commissioned, does not place blame for the tragedy that took the lives of six clients and three guides the morning of Feb. 17, in a wilderness area northeast of Boreal ski resort and I-80.

The report does not make clear why, as conditions worsened, the group left huts where they were staying, and why they didn't turn back when a route chosen for its relative safety appeared impossible to follow.

Blackbird Mountain Guides did not respond Tuesday to questions from this news organization, including why the group left Frog Lake amid the storm and high avalanche danger, and why they did

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CALIFORNIA RULING

Court mandates wider use of electronic recordings

By Robert Salonga
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SAN FRANCISCO — California's highest court ruled Monday that low-income litigants can no longer be forced to choose between delaying an important civil hearing and proceeding without the verbatim record they may need to challenge a judge's ruling.

The unanimous decision from the state Supreme Court requires trial courts statewide to provide an official verbatim record upon request to litigants who cannot reasonably afford a private court reporter. When no official reporter is available, courts must permit electronic recording, including in family, probate and other civil proceedings where state law has generally prohibited it.

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BIG SUR

Timber Fire grows, stranding condors

The blaze grew to over 2,900 acres Tuesday, threatening 259 structures

By Chris Hamilton and Caelyn Pender
BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

BIG SUR — Two endangered California condors recovering from lead poisoning were stranded Tuesday after the Timber Fire engulfed the only road

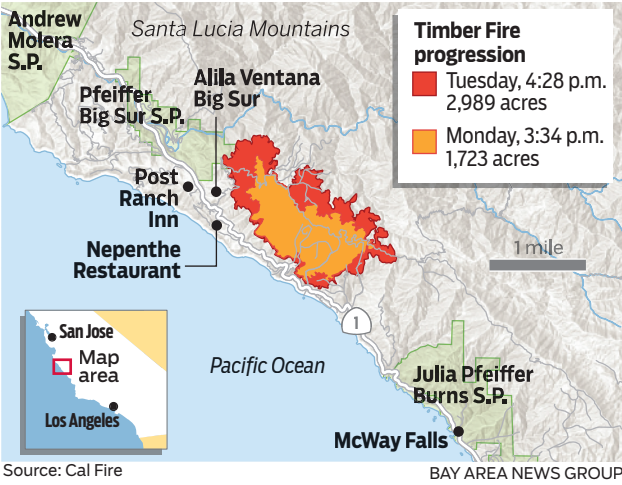
to their remote sanctuary near Big Sur, preventing staff members from replenishing their food and water.

With firefighting aircraft making a helicopter rescue impossible, wildlife workers faced the prospect of hiking into the rugged sanctuary before the U.S. Forest Service offered another way in: driving them there aboard one of its trucks.

The trapped birds were among the mounting consequences of a fire that grew to more than 2,900 acres,

prompted authorities to close a stretch of Highway 1 and forced more residents to evacuate Tuesday. The fire remained 5% contained.

The highway was closed as of 2 p.m. between Fernwood Resort and the Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park Vista Point. Although motorists could still reach the closure points, officials urged visitors to stay away as Car Week crowds descend on the Monterey Peninsula.



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