



# HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## Hacienda La Puente Unified Students Enhance Safety Through Community Emergency Response Training

**CITY OF INDUSTRY** – La Puente High School students and staff strengthened their dedication to real-world civic action by participating in the National Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) program, a hybrid course developed to educate and train individuals in disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their school, household and District community.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sponsored program was set in motion by the school's Public Safety Career Technical Education (CTE) pathway instructor Antonia Ramirez. After extensive research, Ramirez introduced 29 CTE students and six staff members, including Principal Dr. Lisa Lopez, to the hybrid CERT program – a nine-unit online course packed with a rigorous curriculum provided by the University of Utah, and completed with a hands-on practical portion led by the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD) on April 13.

"I want to thank our amazing principal Dr. Lopez for supporting this endeavor, the University of Utah for providing a flexible option for individuals across the nation to be certified and the Los Angeles County Fire Department for partnering with us to coordinate the in-person portion of the program," Ramirez said. "Earning this credential alongside my exceptional students and colleagues was an experience I will never forget and look forward to what the future holds with our partners and this program."

During classroom instruction, students engaged in online lectures, which focused on fundamental fire safety, search and rescue techniques, triaging methods, team organization, disaster medical operations, and more. Upon completing the online course, Ramirez contacted LACFD to see if they would be interested in collaborating. La Puente High School spent months planning with LACFD's firefighter Christopher Freeman, numerous Fire Captains and community service liaisons to ensure the program was safe and successful.

LACFD members welcomed CERT program participants to the in-person training day, beginning with a summary of the units and hands-on activities, including extinguishing fires and safely turning off utilities.

Following the training, participants were assigned a role, some victims and others first responders, where they applied their learnings through a series of rescue simulations and assessments under the guidance of LACFD.

The event concluded with a graduation ceremony, where LACFD members proudly presented all 35 participants with their CERT program certificates.

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"I was so nervous about doing the in-person CERT training but it was actually a lot of fun and very informative," 10th-grade Public Safety pathway student Ruby Ornelas said. "I was tasked with doing treatment and triage during the simulations and I felt so empowered knowing that these skills would help me benefit my community in the event of an emergency. On top of earning this certificate, the Public Safety pathway offers other certifications and pieces of training to help us excel in our careers, and for that, I am so grateful."

La Puente High School's Public Safety pathway is one of the school's longest-standing pathways in the District, providing students with a three-year program in criminal justice, forensic science and emergency dispatch for nearly two decades.

"We have numerous programs that support public engagement, including Project LEAD and JROTC, both award-winning programs that foster informed citizens and promote change," Lopez said. "It's an honor to add this certification to our list of services and we look forward to continuing to build partnerships and provide resources that motivate our students to graduate, have the strength and courage to do what is right, lead, and return to our beautiful school community and give back to future generations."

Following the ceremony, the newly proclaimed CERT members were presented with CERT backpacks, a testament to their dedication and preparedness for real-life emergency scenarios. These backpacks contain essential safety gear, including goggles, helmets, vests, and first aid kits, equipping them for any situation that may arise.

Ramirez plans to partner with LACFD for its second cohort this fall and said she intends to launch a CERT club at the start of the 2024-25 school year, offering students the opportunity to compete in CERT competitions across the state.

"Hacienda La Puente Unified is committed to providing all students with engaging, real-life experiences that increase self-awareness, bolster empathy and stress the importance of contributing to their community," Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez said. This experience will undoubtedly have a lasting impact and strengthen our efforts to foster a culture of service and preparedness and empower our students to explore lucrative and rewarding careers in public service."

## PHOTO CAPTIONS:

**HLPUSD\_CERT1:** La Puente High School students and staff celebrate completing the National Community Emergency Response Training during the in-person portion of the hybrid program on April 13.

**HLPUSD\_CERT2:** La Puente High School Public Safety pathway students participate in a treatment simulation during a Community Emergency Response Training simulation on April 13.

**HLPUSD\_CERT3:** Los Angeles County Fire Department support La Puente High School students as they extinguish a fire during the in-person portion of their hybrid CERT training on April 13.

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