

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

SCICON Program to Close Temporarily After Students Experience Flu-Like Symptoms

Visalia - The Tulare County Office of Education's SCICON Program is closing temporarily after approximately 15 students began exhibiting stomach flu symptoms. Today, a total of 217 sixth-grade students and 35 high school-aged cabin counselors from schools in Farmersville, Porterville, Lemon Cove and Visalia are being sent home from the program in the foothills east of Springville. Students arrived at the SCICON program on Monday for a full-week of studies. The program will remain closed next week, Monday through Wednesday, November 20 - 22, 2006.

Five students exhibited symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea Wednesday afternoon and evening, November 15. This morning, approximately ten other students showed similar symptoms. "We have taken this proactive step of returning all students to their schools to reduce exposure due to the increased spread of illness in a close environment," says Tulare County Superintendent

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of Schools Jim Vidak. "Schools have reported a higher incident of stomach flu recently, so it stands to reason that SCICON students would follow the trend. We've elected to remain closed next week so that we can assess with County health officials the best course of action."

Tulare County health officials indicate that it is probable that children with symptoms may have come to camp after having been in contact with other ill children at home or school, and became ill while at camp. "There is no evidence to suggest that conditions at the camp have contributed to the spread of the illness," said Dr. Karen Haught, Public Health Officer.

"We are working very closely with County education officials to determine the best course of action that is in the best interest of the students," she added.

SCICON is the Outdoor School of Science and Conservation operated by Tulare County Office of Education. SCICON is located eight miles above Springville in the foothills of eastern Tulare County at an elevation between 2000 and 3500 feet above sea level. Within this 1100-acre campus are many miles of hiking trails, a museum of natural history, planetarium, observatory, raptor center and amphitheater for evening activities. SCICON serves approximately 15,000 students and visitors each year and is an exemplary program for environmental education in the Western United States.

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