

Icy weather leaves Westlake Academy gym a 'total loss'

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Westlake Academy's gym floor is a "total loss" after water damage from the ice storm, school officials said.

Late Feb. 4, frozen pipes caused a sprinkler system to leak in a northern closet of the second-story gymnasium causing damage to the gym floor and areas beneath including portions of the dining and performance halls.

The sprinkler system is connected to the school's 911 alarm, which alerted the fire department, who then called school officials.

The school's website, phone and Internet connections were also disrupted because the main computer system was affected.

Westlake Town Manager Tom Brymer said insurance adjusters visited the school Feb. 8 to assess damage and said estimates will be available later this week.

Brymer said despite extensive damage, students have seen little disruption in routine activities.

"Our goal was to make the next regularly scheduled school day as seamless as possible," he said. The gym currently is being used for non-athletic events such as study hall. Physical education classes are being held in classrooms and as weather allows, students go outside for athletic activities, Brymer said.

Basketball practices and games are being held at The Solana Club in Westlake and other area schools.

Brymer said despite dining hall damage, kitchen equipment was spared with no damage to ovens or freezers.



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The hallway and rooms under the school gym were filled with restoration equipment on Feb. 11.



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Belfor Restoration workers clean up damaged floor tiles in a room adjacent to the gym on Feb. 11. The room is where the pipes burst and caused the damage in the rest of the rooms downstairs.

Students are eating box lunches and foods such as pizza in classrooms until repairs are finished.

Because of expected enrollment increases, officials had discussed dining hall modifications prior to the loss.

"Now is a good time to take a look at it and see if we want to pursue something different," Brymer said.

He said it is too soon to know how long repairs will take but expects the gym floor to be replaced during the summer.

He also said damages could have been a lot worse.

"The reason we were able to hold the damage to that level is from the excellent team of municipal government and school officials working together," Brymer said. "This incident validates the effectiveness of the shared service model."

Many employees got little or no sleep for a few days after the leak, he said. "We have a lot of heroes."

One of those heroes, he said, is Troy Meyer director of facilities and parks.

The leak occurred around 8 p.m., Meyer said. When he soon after arrived on the scene, public administrators were already helping school officials by getting generators and making calls to restoration companies.

He said based on the insurance agent's feedback, damages were minimized because of quick efforts between the two teams.

"We got the job done very quickly," Meyer said.