

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County Clerk

County of: Marin
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

From: (Public Agency): Novato Unified School District
1015 Seventh Street
Novato, CA 94945

(Address)

Project Title: Novato High School HVAC System Upgrade and Fire Alarm Project

Project Applicant: Novato Unified School District

Project Location - Specific:

625 Arthur Street, Novato, CA. 94947

Project Location - City: Novato

Project Location - County: Marin

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project is fire alarm and HVAC upgrades at Buildings 1000 and 2800, and fire alarm upgrades on all of the other school buildings except Buildings 4000 and 1900, which would be re-connected to the upgraded system. This is needed for safety and comfort for students and faculty.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Novato Unified School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Novato Unified School District

Exempt Status: (check one):

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- ☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 1; Section 15301(b)
- ☒ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Section 15061(b)(3) (General Rule Exemption)

Reasons why project is exempt:

This project involves the upgrading of HVAC systems and installation of improved fire alarm systems in existing buildings. This would involve no expansion of building size or changes in existing building uses (Class 1). There will be no adverse environmental impacts associated with this work (General Rule).

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Joshua Braff

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 415 493-4260

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.

2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Signature: [Signature] Date: 1/15/26 Title: CBO

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

NOVATO HIGH SCHOOL HVAC UPGRADE AND FIRE ALARM PROJECT NOTICE OF EXEMPTION DISCUSSION

Project Description

Existing Conditions

The Novato High School, located at 625 Arthur Street in Novato is owned and operated by the Novato Unified School District. The school is in a single-family residential neighborhood, with houses directly adjacent to the school on Buchanan Street to the east, Arthur Street to the north and Van Buren Court to the south.

Proposed Project

The project would consist of fire alarm and HVAC upgrades at Buildings 1000 and 2800, and fire alarm upgrades on all of the other school buildings with the exception of Buildings 4000 and 1900, which would just be re-connected to the upgraded system.

The project would be constructed from June 15 to August 13, 2026.

No other construction on the school grounds or buildings is proposed as part of this project.

The purpose of the project would be to upgrade climate-control and fire safety facilities at the school to ensure a safe and comfortable educational environment for students and faculty.

Categorical Exemption Analysis

Class 1 Exemption

The CEQA Class 1 Exemption for Existing Facilities (Guidelines, Section 15301) applies to the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use.

The project would consist of mechanical and electrical upgrades of existing buildings at the school. It would not affect school capacity and would not add any classrooms.

Exceptions Discussion

Per CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2, exceptions to this categorical exemption can apply where the following occur:

- Cumulative impact of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.
- Significant effect due to unusual circumstances.

- Damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a state scenic highway.
- Hazardous Waste Sites included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- A substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

As summarized below, none of these exceptions appear to apply to this project and therefore this exemption would apply:

- The project area is a developed residential neighborhood, and no cumulative development is likely to occur nearby. No other projects are proposed at the school with possible concurrent construction. In addition, the proposed project's impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable, and there would be no potential for cumulatively considerable impacts.
- Construction would be repainting and exterior repairs to existing structures, which would not change the exterior appearances of the buildings. Therefore, this impact would be non-significant.
- The site is not on or near a listed hazardous waste site (database search performed December 15, 2025
https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/search?CMD=search&city=Novato&zip=94947&county=&case_number=&business_name=&FEDERAL_SUPERFUND=True&STATE_RESPONSE=True&VOLUNTARY_CLEANUP=True&SCHOOL_CLEANUP=True&CORRECTIVE_ACTION=True&tiered_permit=True&evaluation=True&operating=True&post_closure=True&non_operating=True&inspections=True&inspections_other=True)
- The project would not change the building exteriors other than HVAC upgrades and fire alarm work. It would not demolish or substantially alter any historic structures. Therefore no historic resources would be affected.
- The project is at a fully developed school and there are not any unusual circumstances that could result in significant environmental impacts at the site.

General Rule Exemption

Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to environmental review. In such cases, the activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. (See CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3)). As described above, the project does not have the potential to result in a significant impact to the physical environment. Therefore this exemption would apply.