

Summary: Fire Alarm and Suppression Systems at BIE-Funded School Not Fully Functioning

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The OIG investigated allegations that school officials and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) failed to maintain and repair the fire alarm and fire suppression systems at Pine Hill Schools, in Pine Hill, NM. We also investigated whether Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contracting personnel failed to include lightning protection in the contracts to repair the systems.

We found that the school has been operating without fully functioning fire alarm and fire suppression systems since approximately 2005. School officials attempted to contract for the repairs on its own from roughly 2005 to 2012, then relinquished responsibility to BIE. BIA, which administers contracts on behalf of BIE, awarded two contracts for approximately \$1.2 million to repair the systems. Work on the systems is now largely complete but they have still not passed multiple safety inspections.

We also confirmed the BIA contracting personnel did not include lightning protection in the contract scopes of work despite at least two lightning strikes that had damaged the systems and contributed to cost overruns and project delays. Although funding for a lightning protection project has been approved for more than a year, BIA has not drafted a new scope of work or solicitation.

This is a summary of a report we provided to the directors of BIE and the BIA.

