

Update from Cobb County Schools

Dear Cobb Schools Team,

As one part of Cobb's multi-layered response to COVID-19, the District selected a UV light disinfectant for the District's schools. UV light has long been used in hospitals, schools and other organizations to eliminate viral and bacterial threats. A UV-based solution was appealing to the District as it did not require the daily use of chemicals to clean surfaces used by students, staff, and faculty. ProTek Life, the proposal selected by the District, offered a UV-based solution that could be scheduled to operate at night when schools were unoccupied.

As part of the request for proposal (RFP) process, ProTek Life was required to provide and meet health and safety guarantees, including UV lights not operating in rooms when students or staff were present. Their proposal required each room to have a motion detector as a fail-safe, ensuring the device would not activate if a student or staff member walked into the room. Their proposed solution also included timing hardware they stated would prevent activation during unscheduled times. Before installing ProTek's solution, the District tested their hardware during a proof of concept period, which was successful in three of the District's schools.

Unfortunately, what appears to be a malfunction involving the UV lights occurred at Argyle Elementary School on Monday, February 22nd. It appears timing hardware and motion detectors did not work as described. These hardware failures led to UV lights turning on in two offices during a time of the day when they should not have been able to operate. Although no students were present in either office, one adult was present, suggesting the motion detector and timing hardware failed. In addition, other UV lights flickered on and off throughout the building in what appeared to be attempts to turn on.

Following this incident, the District immediately paused the use of UV lights in all Cobb schools and conducted an investigation. After our Technology department's analysis, it was determined the safeguards did not function as required in the District's RFP process. In the instance at Argyle, the District's high expectation and safety requirements were not met despite ProTek Life's assurances.

While we understand and appreciate this hardware failure was limited to Argyle Elementary, the District established very specific and high safety expectations during the RFP process. Based on the incident at Argyle Elementary on February 22, 2021, we have determined ProTek's hardware does not meet the safety requirement described in and required by our RFP process.

We have informed ProTek Life that we are stopping any further installations of ProTek's UV lighting, are requiring the removal of all installed ProTek UV lights from Cobb schools, and are requesting repayment of funds paid to ProTek Life under the terms of the contract.

We acknowledge the success of the ProTek Life product during the proof-of-concept period and ProTek Life's belief that this is a single failure of their product. We also appreciate it does not appear any employees or students were harmed by this failure. However, we do not believe even a single failure to meet the high health and safety standard established in our RFP process is acceptable.

Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our students and staff. We appreciate your continued support and will continue to actively seek to keep Cobb students and staff as healthy and safe as possible.