

Hello,

I'm Lulu Ramadan, a reporter at The Palm Beach Post. I grew up in Palm Beach County and attended Palm Beach County public schools from Kindergarten to high school. For the past five years, I have been covering local government and other topics at The Post.

I'm reaching out because I'm researching the potential health effects of sugar cane burning in the Glades. I'm working with ProPublica, a nonprofit newsroom, and I think you might be able to help. We've heard from many in the community who say that cane burning has fueled respiratory problems, particularly among children.

I see in public records that you teach students at a public school in the area. You may have witnessed the potential health effects of cane burning, or even experienced them yourself. I'd like to hear about your experiences.

I'm especially interested in an incident that happened in 2008. Six kids were hospitalized at Rosenwald Elementary School in South Bay after smoke wafted onto campus from a nearby burn. Still, little was reported about the incident - even by The Palm Beach Post.

My colleague maya miller and I want to hear about your experiences with cane burning, even if they aren't related to that specific day.

I understand you might want to maintain privacy or anonymity, and I take that seriously. I promise not to use your name in any stories without your permission.



Stories like these can lead to real impact, and I know you have dedicated your career to helping children who may be struggling.

If you have any information or know someone who can help us with our reporting, please reach out to me at Iramadan@pbpost.com or call me at (561) 767-1419.

Thankyou for reading this, and I look forward to hearing from you,

Lulu

Sugar cane burn sends 6 students to hospital

Winds are blamed for blowing smoke over a South Bay school.

By ALLYSON BIRD
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

SOUTH BAY — Six Roserwald Elementary School students were taken to Glades General Hospital on Wednesday morning after they complained of breathing problems, and paramedics treated another nine at the school. Smoke from a burning sugar cane field nearby had wafted over to the school, fire-rescue officials said.

Roserwald began an evacuation to Pioneer Park Elementary School and had loaded children onto buses when the smoke stopped, Palm Beach County School District spokeswoman Vickie Middlebrooks said. The students remained at Roserwald.

Judy Sanchez, spokeswoman for U.S. Sugar Corp., said she isn't sure the smoke was from its field, which is a half-mile to a mile from the school.

The Division of Forestry issued a permit for the morning burn and later told U.S. Sugar the wind pattern was an "atmospheric anomaly," Sanchez said.

Burning fields clears out the heavy matter that makes it harder to reach the

cane inside the stalks, Sanchez said. She said the school has its own field and that burning never before posed problems.

"We will evaluate our program, and if changes need to be made, we'll make changes," Sanchez said.

Palm Beach County Fire-Rescue Capt. Don DeLucia said the situation was unusual.

"I think it just happened to be the way the wind blew today — right over the school," he said.

The children, who complained of breathing problems but were not taken to the hospital, were given oxygen through a nebulizer, DeLucia said.

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What I've covered before: Local government and politics in Palm Beach County, Florida vote-by-mail access, restoration of voting rights to felons.



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What I've covered before: Hospital debt collection practices, the health effects of wildfire smoke, the logging and timber industry.