



BCA

Bundy Canyon Association

**This email was sent to Bundy Canyon Association from a concerned parent, written by her daughter, a student housed on the Chalon Campus. We have removed the names and some identifying information to protect their privacy.**

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** November 10, 2019 at 12:15:55 PM PST  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Experience of Getty Fire

Hi, my name is [REDACTED]. I am a [REDACTED] student at the Chalon Campus. I have been dorming on campus since I've been attending Mount Saint Mary's. I reside in the [REDACTED] building, where I have my own private room and bathroom, as do most of the students living in this building.

On the early morning of October 28th, beginning at 2 am I was awakened by the commotion of girls talking and running around in the hallway. The smell of smoke was heavily present. I just assumed it was from a fire that was nowhere near the school since I had been smelling smoke for the past week from the Santa Clarita and Pacific Palisades Fire.

After waking up, I went out to the hallway to see what was going on. Three girls and the RA were talking about the smell and that there was, in fact, a fire approaching the school. One girl asked the RA if we were going to be evacuated. At the time, the RA did not sound too concerned and said, "at this time, we are not being evacuated" and that we can leave if we wanted to.

I went back to my room to check the time to see that it was 2:15 am. I decided to go outside and check what was going on for myself. I opened the back door of Rossiter and saw that there was a fire on the mountain behind the school and to the right of the hillside. My first thought was, "oh my gosh, how are we not evacuating right now."

Other people were outside running to their cars and already leaving. My adrenaline kicked in, and I began to panic. I was already sick for the past two days, and I kept coughing from the smell of smoke. I ran back into my dorm room and called my mom to tell her that there was a fire right behind my school. I quickly told her I was going to pack up a bag, and I would call her right back to let her know more of what was going on.

As I was packing my bag in my room, I saw lights from the fire department trucks pull up. This made me more scared because I knew this meant things were getting serious. I went back out to the hallway to see if there were any updates from the RA. She was just standing there, saying, "we aren't being evacuated yet."

This was when more students started to pour out from the hallways. Some look like they just had woken up and weren't aware of the fire that was going on. When I was still on my floor, I didn't hear one RA bother to knock on the doors to wake girls up or alert them that there was a fire. Students basically found out by themselves or from friends knocking on their doors. I went back outside through the back door to see that LAFD was telling people to leave. During this time, I was on FaceTime with my mom to show her how close the fire was. Fire trucks were in the parking lots by the tennis courts, behind the chapel, and next to Rossiter Hall. People continued to leave in their cars. I went back to my dorm room to get the bag that I packed and called my mom back to tell her I'm unsure what to do.

She told me to evacuate with the school. **Not one fire alarm went off in my building or any other building. I know that this didn't go off because we have one fire drill at the beginning of each semester, and this sound perforates the whole entire school.** When I was walking through the halls to go the circle, I noticed that there were still some girls who had no idea what was going on. I walked to the circle because this is where students usually go when something like this is occurring and **per the MSMU Fire evacuation protocol in the handbook.** When I get to the circle, there weren't many students as there usually is when we do fire drills.

Again, I think this is because no one even knew that a fire was happening because fire alarms hadn't gone off, or people were still sleeping. I waited at the circle, thinking that transportation was going to be provided. Then more students started to show up at the circle, and we formed a line where shuttles usually pick up students. I waited here for a good 35 minutes. At 2:49 am, and 2:51 am, the school sent out an E-alert saying, "LAFD has ordered an immediate evacuation. "Leave now." This was scary because there were many of us students still on campus, and we were under the impression we would be picked up by shuttles. **How could we leave and where would we leave to if there was nowhere for us to go?**

There is freshman, out of state students, and international students who don't have cars on campus. I myself and many other students were in our pajamas. Some girls didn't get to pack a bag, as many were empty-handed. It was starting to get late, and the fire was moving fast. I became even more scared because transportation still didn't show up.

**The 24-hour security guards were nowhere to be found, so it's not like we could ask them what was going on or what we are supposed to do. Still, no fire alarms were going off.**

At this point, many girls were starting to converse with one another, asking if they should get an Uber. Many girls were starting to take matters in their own hands and move further down from the circle to the campus center. I, along with other girls, walked to the campus center and continued to wait 15 minutes. I called my mom to tell her that I was still waiting for transportation. It did not show.

**While waiting at the campus center, this is when the power went off, and the lights from the school had shut off.** My mom was on the other line trying to get ahold of security but was unsuccessful. After 15 minutes, more of us girls started to walk down the stairs by the parking garage and past the guard shack to Chalon road. As we were walking down the campus, the hillside was on fire to the right side, walking down from the school.

We waited at the end where you have the option to either turn to go up to the Carondelet center or straight up to the campus. The fire department and police pulled up where we were waiting. I

was confused because I was still unsure whether transportation was coming or where we're supposed to go. After waiting, myself and other residents started to proceed walking down the hill. ***This was the most miserable experience for me because I didn't even know where I was walking to.*** All I know was that I was trying to go further away from the fire. I was in my pajamas and carrying a heavy bag full of things that I could pack. I got in a car accident 2 days prior to the fire and was suffering from a back sprain. I was ordered from the doctor not to do any heavy lifting. In the process of walking down the hill through the neighborhood I injured my leg by tripping because my body was naturally going fast walking downhill. Gravity naturally pulls you downhill. Weighing 95 pounds and carrying a heavy bag, I had to stop numerous times to catch my breath, and my body was already sore. As I was walking, I saw many neighbors outside packing up their cars. As cars were passing myself and many of the other girls walking, some had stopped and asked if they wanted a ride.

There were also a lot of fire department and police going through the neighborhoods. I overheard one girl say that ambulances were picking students up. However, my time walking down the hill, I only saw one ambulance sitting at the corner of Bundy and Sunset.

At this time, no students were in that ambulance or students proceeding to it. After my journey down the hill, I waited for a friend and her parents to pick me up. I am very thankful for this because I really wouldn't have any other help or transportation otherwise. I and other students were walking unanimously, which is a very frightening feeling. ***There was no chain of command or authority telling us what to do, what was going on, or where we are supposed to go during the time I was at my dorm room, in the circle, and walking down the hill to sunset boulevard.***

I understand that one cannot control a fire, but one can certainly control the way you handle or deal with it. ***I am utterly disheartened and disappointed in Mount Saint Mary's in the way they handled the situation. This was negligent on their part, especially after the Skirball fire in 2017; one would think that an effective plan would be in place.***

This fire on October 28th was ten times worse. ***Not one fire evacuation protocol was followed in the MSMU Student Handbook. Not one fire alarm went off, no chain of command giving us direction, no transportation.*** My life and the lives of all residents on campus that night, were put in direct danger.

***It is clear that the safety of the students was not a priority that night.*** Not to mention as girls were walking down the hill, one girl was approached by a strange man asking if she needed a ride. I cannot speak on behalf of all the students of Mount Saint Mary's University, but one thing is for sure, this will be something we ALL never forget. I am traumatized and emotionally distraught. I don't think I would be feeling half this way if the school protected us and followed an effective evacuation procedure.

I am graduating in May, and this is the last thing I want to remember about my school. This is supposed to be the time of my life enjoying school and focusing on the next chapter of my life. I chose Mount Saint Mary's because I entrusted that I would be safe on this campus and receive a good education from caring professors. ***I am at a loss for words the circumstances that have taken place regarding the aftermath of the fire. I was homeless for a week. The school did not bother to check if I was okay or if I was accounted for. The way the school has continued to handle things post-fire has been very disappointing and discouraging. So I am not sure what is worse going through the actual fire or the aftermath of it.***

