

COMMUNICATIONS TIPS FOR SCHOOL THREATS

- It is important to share as much information as you can with parents, board members, staff and community members in as timely a manner as possible without breaching confidentiality. In the absence of information from the school district, the information void likely will be filled by social media, possibly resulting in rumors and false information. Given the nature of social media, you should expect threats to circulate through the community quickly.
- The message should be shared with and vetted by local law enforcement to make sure nothing in the message impedes the investigation. The message would carry more weight if it is a joint message from the superintendent and law enforcement, if that is possible.
- The message should include such things as:
 - ✓ The nature of the threat;
 - ✓ The date/time included in the threat if one is specified (without this information, you take away a parent's choice whether to send their child to school on that particular day);
 - ✓ The fact that law enforcement was immediately contacted and is investigating or has completed an investigation of the threat;
 - ✓ The fact that the threat has been deemed not credible by law enforcement (if that has been determined);
 - ✓ Whether school will be opened or closed (if it is to be closed, that should be the first thing mentioned in the message);
 - ✓ The fact that additional security measures are being implemented out of an abundance of caution (things like additional law enforcement presence, reducing the number of entrances, security checks at the entrances);
 - ✓ Reassure parents that the safety of students and staff is the top priority for school officials and law enforcement and that those two entities are working together to resolve the issue as soon as possible.
 - ✓ Asking parents and community members to contact law enforcement if they have any information regarding the threat.
- The message should be updated when the situation is resolved or as necessary based on new developments.
- Keep your school board in the loop early in the process.
- In dealing with media inquiries or any inquiries from the public, you should stick to only what is included in the message to parents. The message must be consistent to be effective.



**Illinois Terrorism Task Force
School Safety Working Group**