The School Safety Information Sharing Program Milestone - 5th Year!

This is the fifth volume of the School Safety Newsletter. As this program heads into the fifth year, please feel free to pass this newsletter along and encourage those in your schools, districts or campuses, who work to improve safety, to sign up for the program. To sign up, send an email to schoolsafety@isp.state.il.us and request the application and non-disclosure form. There are currently over 850 program members.

For program members, please remember that any safety concerns, threats, and trends at your school, district, or campus, can be affecting others. By sending an email to the address above with information regarding your safety concerns, you are allowing this information to be shared with others that could benefit from the information. The goal of this program continues to be sharing information to improve safety at schools and campuses in Illinois.

Looking forward to a new and safe year. Please let me know how I can help. - Kind regards, Mia

After Bomb Threat 'Hoax,' Universities Face Concerns About Network Security

USA Today, June 5, 2017

http://college.usatoday.com/2017/06/05/after-bomb-threat-hoax-universities-face-concerns-about-network-security/

Universities across the country are grappling with a series of similar bomb threats sent to campus printers and fax machines over the past two weeks, prompting questions about how attackers were able to gain access to university networks to send the threats.

The universities affected include Vanderbilt University, University of Southern California, University of Virginia and University of Detroit-Mercy, among other potential targets. Businesses around the nation have also been on the receiving end of the bomb threats, ranging in location from Asheville, N.C. and Grand Forks, N.D. to Detroit, Mich., Fairview Park, Ohio and Pompton Lakes, N.J.

The threats appear to be part of a nationwide scam, according to the Citizen-Times in Asheville. Universities and businesses found print-outs, faxes and emails asking for a ransom to be paid by Western Union in the amount of $25,000 to a Brazilian citizen, Asheville police told the Citizen-Times.

The letter stated that the recipients' properties were rigged with explosives that would be set off if the ransom was not paid. Local police authorities in Detroit and Ohio said the threats were part of a hoax and not credible.

A spokesman for University of Detroit-Mercy told The Detroit News that the school was among more than 100 organizations across the U.S. that received the form letter bomb threat. The FBI has launched investigations into the source of the threats, and said in a public statement that they "remain in touch with our law enforcement partners to provide assistance if needed." Though law enforcement authorities do not consider the threats to be credible, the attackers' ability to send threats through university printers raises questions about how universities manage the security of their computer networks.

This is not the first time universities have dealt with unauthorized use of their printers for potentially dangerous purposes. Vanderbilt, Stanford University and UC Berkeley were among the universities that saw anti-Semitic fliers appear in their printers and fax machines in January.

Protecting our future through information sharing

After Bomb Threat 'Hoax,' Universities Face Concerns About Network Security (Continued)

Universities that received print-out threats are likely placing their printers outside of their network's firewall in order to make it easier for students to print from off campus, says Zachary N. J. Peterson, an associate professor of computer science at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

"That seems like, on the surface, a sensible decision," Peterson says. "The problem is just when others know that, and now they're printing things that are obnoxious or obscene from off campus. It's likely just trolling, people trying to prove a point or create a scare factor."

When it comes to receiving threats by faxes, universities face an entirely different problem, Peterson says. "They are inherently publicly facing," Peterson told USA TODAY College, referring to a fax machine's purpose of facilitating communication. "Getting spam by fax is nothing new, and as long as fax machines have been around, people have been spamming faxes."

Though universities cannot prevent receiving faxed threats due to the public nature of fax machines, they can address some printer security concerns by keeping their software up to date, not using default passwords and configuring their devices correctly, Peterson says.

Some universities are already following this advice. After receiving the threat letter on May 30, the University of Virginia announced that they would take "corrective action to close off external access to some publicly accessible printers."

But Peterson argues that the responsibility of securing the devices from potential attacks lies with the manufacturer, not the consumer.

"All of this feels a little bit like victim blaming, where we are selling these devices that are just inherently insecure," Peterson says. "Then we're suddenly like, "Well, what can you do to secure them?' It's really the manufacturer's responsibility to be doing that and identifying these vulnerabilities before those printers ever leave the factory."

Right now, Peterson says that major computer manufacturers do not have any economic motivation to properly secure their devices because consumers do not financially punish companies for security problems. Instead, consumers often prioritize usability and the simplicity of a device's interface.

But Peterson thinks that security will soon become a factor in how consumers make decisions about which devices to buy and which to avoid, largely because of the headaches users face when trying to protect their data and passwords.

"All of a sudden, we're going to see an economic value put on to making a device more secure," Peterson says.

While Peterson is optimistic about the future of computer security, he is less hopeful that the attacker behind the recent spate of bomb threats will be found. In theory, the source and destination of the threats can be tracked, but the reality is often different.

"Clever attackers cover their tracks," Peterson says. "They can use technologies that essentially bounce their traffic off of other machines or somehow mask it so even if you did try to back-trace where this attack came from, you may not end up with the true source of the attack."

Suicide Rate Hit 40-year Peak Among Older Teen Girls in 2015

CNN, August 3, 2017

http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/03/health/teen-suicide-cdc-study-bn/index.html

The suicide rate among girls between the ages of 15 and 19 reached a 40-year high in 2015, according to new data from the National Center for Health Statistics (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/deaths.htm). In the shorter term, the suicide rate for those girls doubled between 2007 and 2015, the research indicates. By comparison, the 2015 suicide rate for boys in this age group was lower than in the peak years of the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s. The researchers derived suicide rates from official data from death certificates.

"These data show that between 2007 and 2015, there's substantial increases in suicide rates for both young males and young

Suicide Rate Hit 40-year Peak Among Older Teen Girls in 2015 (Continued)

females," said Tom Simon, an author of the report and associate director for science in the division of violence protection at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which published the new data Thursday. "For young males, there was a 31% increase in suicide rates, and for young females, the suicide rate doubled," Simon said.

Potential factors Specifically, the suicide rate for males between 15 and 19 increased from 12 per 100,000 population in 1975 to 18.1 per 100,000 in 1990. It then declined to 10.8 per 100,000 by 2007 and then increased again to 14.2 per 100,000 by 2015. Among females, the suicide rate increased from 2.9 per 100,000 in 1975 to 3.7 per 100,000 in 1990, dipped to 2.4 per 100,000 in 2007 and then spiked to 5.1 per 100,000 in 2015.

"We know that overall in the US, we're seeing increases in suicide rates across all age groups," Simon said, putting the new report in perspective. "We're not seeing the same kind of increases among the oldest adults, but we are seeing substantial and sustained increases now for the other age groups really going back to 2000," he said, adding that the pattern is "pretty robust."

Carl Tishler, an adjunct associate professor of psychology and psychiatry at the Ohio State University who was not involved in the report, said the high suicide rates among older teens in 2015 "could be the result of a lot of things." "Some of the opiate or heroin overdoses in adolescents may be interpreted by emergency departments as suicides. There may be more Internet suicides," Tishler said.

Simon said it's "unlikely" that increases in suicide rates are due to any single factor. Possible risk factors for suicide include a history of substance abuse, exposure to violence, social isolation, conflict within relationships, stigma and a lack of available support. Simon suggested that the lingering effects of the Great Recession in the late 2000s may have contributed to stress within families, causing anxiety in teens. "In times of economic prosperity, suicide rates go down," he said. "In times of economic instability, suicide rates go up."

Gender differences Social media can have either negative or positive effects, Simon said. Cyberbullying and harmful content might push a vulnerable teen toward self-harm, yet "social media can help increase connections between people, and it's an opportunity to correct myths about suicide and to allow people to access prevention resources and materials."

Dorian A. Lamis, an assistant professor in the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Emory University School of Medicine/Grady Health System, theorized that use of social media and cyberbullying may affect teenage girls more than boys, resulting in rising suicide deaths among older teen girls. "Some research has suggested that the timing of puberty in girls is a contributing factor for the increased suicide rate," said Lamis, who was not involved in the new research. Puberty starts as early as 8 in some girls. The psychosocial and physical changes may leave girls "vulnerable to depression, anxiety and other psychiatric disorders earlier on in life." These known risk factors for suicide may catch up with a girl as she grows older. Tishler noted that previous studies from the CDC have indicated that males take their own lives at nearly four times the rate of females and thus represent 77.9% of all suicides. Yet females are more likely than males to have suicidal thoughts.

"If you look at suicide attempts by girls, it's typically that girls attempt suicide about four to one or three to one over boys, yet boys complete suicide in the reverse," Tishler said. "That tends, we think, to have to do with the modality of suicide attempt." Simon noted that in this older teen age group, the primary method chosen by boys is firearms, yet for girls, the most common method is suffocation. Still, a significant number of females may choose to poison themselves with an overdose, which can be remediated in an ER in some cases, Tishler said. He theorized that girls now have access to pills that may be more lethal -- or more quickly lethal -- than those available to girls in the past, and this may have contributed to the rising rate of suicide deaths among teen girls. Similarly, Lamis conjectured that girls may have access to "more lethal methods in their suicide attempts, resulting in an increased number of deaths."

The new report also does not indicate how many of the teens who completed suicide were in treatment with a medical health professional and how many were receiving medication for depression or other mental illness, Tishler said. He added that he's convinced that the quickness to start or change these medications, which are categorized as psychotropic, "is done in such a manner that makes people more vulnerable to attempting suicide."

"Physicians need to be careful" when increasing, starting or stopping psychotropic medications, because this may "give someone energy to die by suicide," Tishler said. One symptom of depression can be psychomotor retardation, which medication reduces, helping people become more active. They may attempt more activities to do better in school or to be more social. The medicines may give depressed teens more energy to plan and follow through with a suicide attempt or die by suicide. Psychotropic drugs also can change mental status and in some cases may increase suicidal thoughts, which is why some of them come with warnings.

"The message for parents, teachers, coaches and religious leaders is to not be afraid to talk to a young person when they are concerned," Simon said. He added that anyone contemplating suicide or concerned for another should reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255; https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

The First Thing Teachers Should Do When School Starts is Talk About Hatred in America. Here's Help.

Mia Ray Langheim

School Intelligence Officer

The Washington Post, August 13, 2017

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/08/13/the-first-thing-teachers-should-do-when-school-starts-is-talk-about-hatred-in-america-heres-help/?utm_term=.8c12df6ebb58

#CharlottesvilleCurriculum (https://twitter.com/hashtag/CharlottesvilleCurriculum?src=hash) That's the new Twitter hashtag for educators, parents and anyone else looking for resources to lead discussions with young people about the violence that just erupted in Charlottesville, when white supremacists, neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members marched and clashed with counter protesters. One woman was killed and 19 were injured when a car rammed into the counter protesters, and two state police officers assisting in the response died when their helicopter crashed on the outskirts of town.

The 2017-2018 school year is getting started, and teachers nationwide should expect students to want to discuss what happened in Charlottesville as well as other expressions of racial and religious hatred in the country.

While such discussions are often seen as politically charged and teachers like to steer clear of politics, these conversations are about fundamental American values, and age-appropriate ways of discussing hatred and tolerance in a diverse and vibrant democracy are as important as anything young people can learn in school. Civics education has taken a back seat to reading and math in recent years in "the era of accountability," but it is past time for it to take center stage again in America's schools.

The white supremacists, neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan staged their largest rally in decades to "take America back," displaying Confederate and Nazi flags as they targeted every minority in the United States. Given that the population of students in America's school are now majority-minority, that's a lot of young people.

The hashtag #CharlottesvilleCurriculum was started by Melinda D. Anderson, a contributing writer to the Atlantic, who wrote in an email:

"I started the hashtag for a very simple reason: I know that in these situations a common reaction by educators is, 'What should I say? Where do I even begin? I also know that lots of educators are on Twitter – and they look to the platform to connect and learn. So I wanted to create a way to crowdsource resources that would help them begin to explore the historical underpinnings of white supremacy and use the materials to help bring context and clarity to Saturday's events in Virginia — so they could carry that back to their classrooms and schools."

Teachers are already posting some material on Twitter.

The American Federation of Teachers has also collected links for teachers, https://sharemylesson.com/CharlottesvilleCurriculum, and below is a detailed guide from the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance program on how teachers, counselors and administrators should respond to hate and bias when they are manifested in school. Teaching Tolerance offers a long list of resources for educators, with lessons plans and other material. You can find all of that at: https://www.tolerance.org

A guide for Administrators, Counselors and Teachers Responding to Hate and Bias at School can be found at: https://www.scribd.com/document/356175223/Responding-to-Hate-at-School-2017-1#from_embed

Materials from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum for educators, complete with lesson plans and other resources can be found at https://www.ushmm.org/educators, and a full lesson on hate crimes from Teaching Tolerance, can be found by following this article's original web link (listed above at washingtonpost.org), which is offering an Educator Grants program that will provide $500 to $5,000 for projects that educate students to thrive in a diverse society, promote a positive and affirming school climate, and help marginalized students. Educators who work in public or private K-12 schools, as well as alternative schools, therapeutic schools and juvenile justice facilities, are eligible to apply at www.tolerance.org/about/educator-grant-guidelines [tolerance.org]. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis.