



School Safety Newsletter

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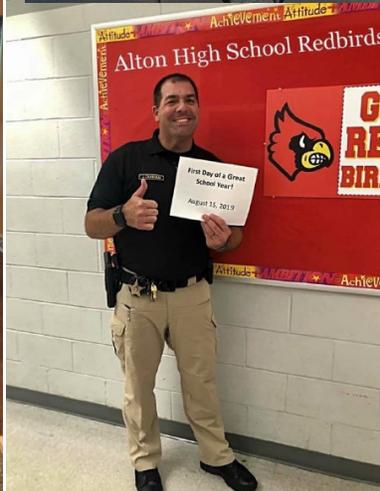
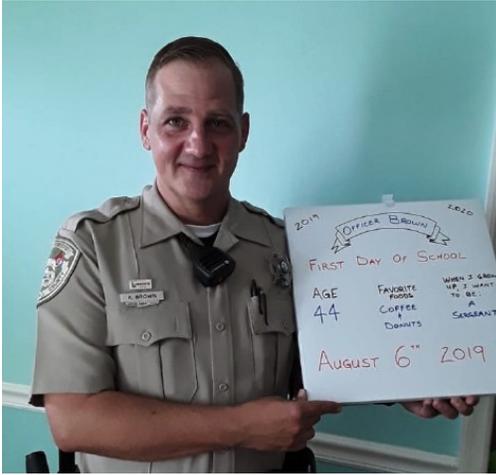
August 2019

Welcome Back to a Great School Year

Protecting our future through information sharing

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At Least 30 Arrested for Mass Shooting Threats in Past 3 Weeks

More than half of the arrests involved mass shooting threats against schools, universities or hospitals and were made through social media.

August 26, 2019, Campus Safety Magazine

https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/university/mass-shooting-threats-contagion/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=content&cid=350362379&bid=2508787

Since 31 people were killed earlier this month in two mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, police say at least 30 individuals have been detained on threats of mass shootings.

Of those arrested, more than half of the threats were made against schools, universities or hospitals. While not all of the threats involved social media, its presence in the majority of these incidents raises concern about the contagion effect of mass shootings through social media.

Back in 2016, a study released by media researchers from New Mexico State University found the amount of social media attention a mass shooting gets affects the likelihood of another shooting in the days following the attack.

Their findings focused primarily on a 2016 study that analyzed 57 billion Twitter posts. The study concluded that if at least 10 out of every million tweets mention a school shooting following an attack, the likelihood of another school shooting goes up 50% in the eight days after the incident.

An earlier study conducted in 2015 found the amount of media coverage a shooting receives has a significant influence on its contagion.

“What we found was that for the mass killings — so these are high-profile mass killings where there’s at least four people killed — there was significant evidence of contagion. We also found significant evidence of contagion in the school shootings,” said Sherry Towers, a faculty research associate at Arizona State University and a contributor to the study.

The researchers also found the window where a shooting is most likely to lead to more incidents is about two weeks.

Jillian Peterson, a criminologist at Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota, also found similar patterns in her own research, emphasizing that intensive media coverage seems to drive the contagion, reports NPR. Peterson compares it to suicide contagion when a high-profile suicide leads to more people taking their own lives. For instance, researchers documented a 10% spike in suicides in the months following the suicide death of actor Robin Williams.

Peterson, who has interviewed living mass shooters in prison, said her research has also found 80% of mass shooting perpetrators were actively suicidal prior to their crime. However, Peterson emphasized the vast majority of people who are suicidal do not hurt others and people with any kind of mental health problem are not more likely to be violent than others. But, a small portion of suicidal people do consider the path of violence toward others.

In regards to the most recent slew of threats, Vanderbilt University sociology and psychology professor Jonathan Metzger said people are “on edge and there’s more concern in communities, more concern among police.” Law enforcement officials are asking the public, as always, to report suspicious activities.

“It’s possible that members of the public are doing better at reporting warning signs to law enforcement,” said University of Alabama criminology professor Adam Lankford. “Although the ‘If You See Something, Say Something’ campaign has been in place for many years, more Americans may now realize that it applies to mass shooting prevention, not only terrorism prevention.”

Below is a breakdown of the recent threats against schools, colleges and hospitals — many of which were discovered thanks to people or persons speaking out. The suspects are both male and female and cover a wide range of ages and geography. Of the 15 threats listed, more than half were made through social media apps, including SnapChat, Twitter and Discord.

- Aug. 11: A 28-year-old Palm Beach County woman was arrested and accused of making an online threat to shoot up her children’s elementary school because she was unhappy they were moved there due to redistricting. The mother was charged with intimidation.

Monthly Webinars!

First Wednesday of Every Month

at 10 am

(Except January, July, and August).

Next Webinars

**Wednesday,
September 4,
2019**

Each webinar has a round table discussion at the end. Questions are always welcome!

To participate, you must be a vetted member. For more information please email

isp.schoolsafety@illinois.edu

At Least 30 Arrested for Mass Shooting Threats in Past 3 Weeks (Continued)

- Aug. 11: A 17-year-old was arrested for making a threat against Oak Grove High School in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. According to police, the boy posted a picture of a weapon on social media alongside a threat towards the school.
- Aug. 13: A 15-year-old Albert Lea, Minnesota, girl was arrested for allegedly threatening to shoot up Albert Lea High School. Police received several phone calls about a threat the student had made and shared on social media. She was arrested for felony threats of violence.
- Aug. 15: A 15-year-old girl was arrested after threatening on social media to shoot up a Fresno, California, high school. The girl posted a photo of a rifle display inside a store along with the message, “Don’t come to school tomorrow.”
- Aug. 16: Tempe police arrested a 14-year-old boy after his threatening messages towards Mountain Pointe High School in Ahwatukee, Arizona, were found online. While there was no reference to the school in the original threat, students were reposting the threatening messages online.
- Aug. 16: A 15-year-old boy was arrested after posting a message on a video game chat that said, “I Dalton Barnhart (a fictitious name) vow to bring my fathers m15 to school and kill 7 people at a minimum.”
- Aug. 16: Two juveniles were arrested in connection to threatening text messages against two Tupelo, Mississippi, schools, including Tupelo Middle School, which went into a partial lockdown. One of the text messages read, “You are a very beautiful girl but I hate to say there is going to be a school shooting this week and a lot of people will die. Save yourself while you can.”
- Aug. 18: A 33-year-old Iraq Veteran is facing three felony counts, including threatening domestic terrorism, after posting YouTube videos threatening violence against a Ferris State University professor and northern Michigan hospitals. Relatives said Holmes is suffering from PTSD.
- Aug. 19: An 18-year-old Hawaii man was arrested and charged with first-degree terroristic threatening after he tweeted that he “might shoot up a school.” Police said he stated he posted the statement because he “thought it was funny.”
- Aug. 20: A 19-year-old man was arrested after he was accused of threatening to shoot up a classroom at the University of Houston Downtown in a Snapchat video. He is facing a felony charge of terroristic threat.
- Aug. 22: A 16-year-old Florida girl faces a felony charge of making a written threat to kill when she allegedly took her sister’s phone and wrote in a group chat, “Next person to say something is the first person I will shoot on the school shooting that will take place this Friday.” Several parents alerted school officials at St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School in Altamonte Springs.
- Aug. 22: A 12-year-old Brandon, Florida, girl was arrested for threatening a mass shooting at Burns Middle School using Snapchat. “Dear bms students I will be shooting that skool [sic] up September 3 2019 be ready say your goodbyes to you’re [sic] family because that is finel [sic]...Goodluck (; be ready,” the post said according to the sheriff’s office. A student reported the threat to their school resource officer.
- Aug. 22: Two 13-year-old male students from Juneau, Alaska, were arrested for planning to take a gun to school and shoot people. Two parents called the Juneau Police Department to report the allegedly overheard plan. Bost students are facing a terroristic threat charge.
- Aug. 22: According to Broward County police, a Nova High School student made a threat through the messaging app Discord. The threat read, “I want to shoot up a school. This is a genuine feeling. I want people to suffer. ... I wish to see those I haven’t shot shake in fear and scream and cry at such a heinous act. Then see the shock on their faces once I’ve shot them too.” The student was charged with false report of a bomb or explosion.
- Aug. 23: Toksook Bay School in Alaska was placed in lockdown after a 17-year-old student allegedly made a threat to shoot up the school after he was kicked out of the building. The student is facing one count of terroristic threatening in the second-degree.

Mass Shooters Often Have a History of Misogyny. The Dayton Shooter is no Different

August 6, 2019, Think Progress

<https://thinkprogress.org/ohio-shooter-joins-long-list-of-mass-shooters-with-records-of-misogyny-50d50afe5a40/>

The gunman who killed nine people in Dayton, Ohio, including his own sister, compiled a list in high school threatening girls with rape, and was part of a music group that embraced misogynistic images and language.

Connor Betts, 24, joins a long list of mass shooters with records of misogyny. Many have records of sexual assault or harassment of women,

Mass Shooters Often Have a History of Misogyny. The Dayton Shooter is no Different (Continued)

abusive behavior toward female family members and partners, and belonging to online misogynist communities.

As a high school student, Betts created two lists of students he wanted to target: Girls' names were placed on a "rape list" and the boys' were on a "hit list." Sources told CNN that some of the female students had turned down Betts for dates; Others had no idea why he put them on the list.

A former classmate said Betts frequently called women "sluts" and talked about violence. One former classmate, Jessica Masseth, told the Daily Beast that he texted her to let her know she was on the list and in the texts, and spoke about "destruction and dismemberment."

Betts performed during the past year with a band called Menstrual Munchies, known as a "pornogrind" or "goregrind" metal band. The music is often violent and dehumanizing toward women and girls. Song titles for Menstrual Munchies included "Cunt Stuffed With Medical Waste – Sexual Abuse Of A Teenage Corpse" and "Preteen Daughter Pu\$\$y Slaughter." The album art included images of a woman's bloody and headless body chained to a bed and an illustration of a woman eating feces.

Betts' demonstrated misogyny has parallels with other mass shooters. In April, John Earnest, a self-described white supremacist and anti-Semite, fired shots inside a California synagogue, killing one person and injuring three others. Authorities said Earnest posted a manifesto on the online message board 8chan before the attack, which included a mention of the "red pill" movement. The movement is associated with anti-feminist and misogynist views, men's rights activists, and "incels," or involuntary celibates. Incels often fantasize about violent acts of revenge against women online.

A Mother Jones database of mass shootings shows a pattern of shooters having records of violence or harassment against women. Mother Jones reported this spring after analyzing 22 mass shootings since 2011, that 32% had a history of stalking and harassment of women, 50% specifically targeted women, and 86% had a history of domestic abuse. Two of those shooters had connections to incel subculture.

Other recent shootings show connections to misogynist ideas as well. An online post allegedly by Santino William Legan, the shooter who killed three people and injured 13 at an outdoor festival last month in Gilroy, California, celebrated the book, "Might Is Right," which includes misogynistic and racist language. The manifesto from Patrick Crusius, who killed 22 people this past weekend in El Paso, complained about "race-mixing" and said it was destroying America. Online far-right spaces often direct misogyny and racism toward white women in relationships with men of color, as well as towards the men, whom they refer to as "invaders."

Incel subculture and white supremacist spaces are replete with examples of white men's anger toward interracial relationships and marriage. Daily Stormer publisher Andrew Anglin wrote that the women are deserving of scorn "because it's OUR WOMB – that's right, it doesn't belong to her, it belongs to the males in her society – that is being used to produce an enemy soldier."

There have been numerous other examples of misogynistic behavior and violence and harassment of women among mass shooters throughout the years. In 2018, Dimitrios Pagourtzis, a 17-year-old student at a Sante Fe, Texas high school, shot and killed 10 people, including a girl who rejected his advances. Scott P. Beierle opened fire on a yoga studio in Florida last November and killed two women after he made misogynistic and racist online videos and complained about women who rejected him. In one video, he said, "Made one date, didn't show up. Made another date, didn't show up. Kept making excuses. Ah, I could've ripped her head off."

Alek Minassian, who also identified with incels, killed 10 people and wounded 14, most of them women, in Toronto. Minassian killed and injured his victims by driving a van down a busy street. He was an admirer of Elliot Rodger, who killed six people and injured 14 others in California in 2014 to "punish all females for the crime of depriving me of sex."

Update: Splinter has reported that the Betts' sibling was a transgender man who went by the name Jordan Cofer. The piece had been updated to reflect this additional reporting.

Can Teachers Be Trained to Prevent Future School Shootings? Researchers Say Yes.

August 15, 2019, EdSurge

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-08-15-can-teachers-be-trained-to-prevent-future-school-shootings-researchers-say-yes>

Most school shooters are current or former students. Most are suicidal. And most share their plans in advance.

These are among the key findings of The Violence Project, a research effort examining 50 years of mass shootings in the U.S.

The project's insights have been cited widely in news stories in the wake of recent mass shootings in Dayton and El Paso. While informing the American public is certainly of interest to project leaders Jillian Peterson and James Densley, the professors have a more specific audience in mind. They want to translate their work into practical training for teachers and school administrators hoping to prevent violence from breaking out in their classrooms and campuses.

Can Teachers Be Trained to Prevent Future School Shootings? Researchers Say Yes. (Continued)

“People have a lot of misinformation around school shootings,” says Peterson, a psychologist and professor of criminology and criminal justice at Hamline University. “Being able to bring data to people is really powerful.”

The researchers are currently developing a day-long course to share their findings with educators. Their chief recommendations include training every member of a school community to recognize when a student is in crisis and responding with help rather than punishment or alienation.

“You want to bring a student into the school rather than push them out,” Peterson says.

Sharing Insights

The Violence Project analysis offers insights that run counter to some of the assumptions students, parents and the public frequently make about school safety.

For example, the lockdown, shelter-in-place and armed assailant drills common in U.S. schools would make a lot of sense if most school shootings were carried out by random strangers. And indeed, there is evidence that a locked classroom door does help protect students from harm in dangerous situations, says Stephen Brock, a professor and school psychology program coordinator at California State University at Sacramento, who is a former president of the National Association of School Psychologists.

But because current and former students account for nearly all school shootings, running frequent drills may actually teach students how to circumvent security systems, Peterson points out.

“We tend to think of [shooters] as scary outsiders, but they tend to be people in crisis in the school,” she says.

Yet education mental health experts interviewed by EdSurge were not surprised by the findings.

“It sounds consistent with what the science has told us,” says Sharon Hoover, associate professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and co-director of the National Center for School Mental Health.

Before carrying out shootings, students in crisis usually tell someone about their plans, The Violence Project research shows. That phenomenon is known as “leakage,” Brock explains.

“People don’t suddenly wake up one day and commit acts of violence,” he says. “It’s the rare exception rather than the rule that a person doesn’t leak.”

But students can leak their intentions in all kinds of ways that are difficult to track, such as dropping hints to other students or posting online. That makes it important for schools to create cultures where students feel comfortable reporting threats to adults, Peterson says. School IT specialists also have a role to play monitoring social media platforms and internet use for signs of a student in crisis.

When threats are made, Peterson advises schools not to jump straight to punitive action like suspension or expulsion. Instead, mental health experts should be called in to screen for self-harm tendencies.

“You want students to threaten, actually. You want to know they’re feeling like this,” Peterson says. “These are really suicides. They don’t have an exit plan. They’re really saying, ‘I don’t care what happens to me after tomorrow.’ See that as a cry for help rather than something that will be criminally charged.”

Another fact from the research: Most mass shooters are men, and most school shooters are boys. For Peterson, the challenge is finding effective ways to teach concepts such as resilience and social emotional learning to young boys—particularly those who have experienced trauma.

While most anti-bullying interventions are not gender specific, there are researchers studying how to help boys in particular manage aggression, Hoover says.

In the future, The Violence Project research could yield policy implications. While zero-tolerance approaches to threats of school violence have faded in recent years, thanks in part from guidance issued by the Obama administration, the Trump administration recently rescinded that guidance.

“The evidence is pretty clear that zero-tolerance policies where we just kick kids out don’t work. They result in more disruptive behaviors,” Hoover says.

What the research hasn’t produced, however, is a foolproof method for predicting the next school shooter.

Can Teachers Be Trained to Prevent Future School Shootings? Researchers Say Yes. (Continued)

“It’s important that we acknowledge that there is no profile we can apply proactively to individuals that would predict dangerous behaviors,” Brock says. “While there are some things people who have committed these acts have in common, there is no single profile. They’re all pretty unique. They all have their own idiosyncrasies.”

Practical Applications

In July, Peterson and Densley tested their training program with a half-day pilot session for educators at the offices of Education Minnesota, a union of teachers and other school staff members based in St. Paul. Attendees gave it mixed reviews.

Brian Rappe, a middle school special education teacher, appreciated the significance of the data presented but doubted the practicality of watching every student closely for signs of personal crisis, considering typical staff-to-student ratios.

“It was frustrating knowing the lack of resources we have for situations like that,” he says.

However, he appreciated the researchers’ suggestions for treating students in crisis thoughtfully.

“The visual she gave that really impacted me was when she was talking about a student as an overfilled balloon, ready to pop. If you let a little air out, that could relax the situation,” Rappe says. “Your job at the moment is not to solve the situation, it’s to de-escalate the situation so that you can start to solve the situation.”

The training made Kelly Wilson, president of a local unit of Education Minnesota, question whether improving trauma care might not be a better use of funds than some of the expensive security systems schools use to try to promote safety.

“We spend all of our time fortifying and bullet-proofing,” he says. “I’m fine with getting controls in, but when are we going to actually focus on the kids’ needs?”

Rappe left with a new appreciation of the role every adult in a school can play in looking out for students who may be considering violent acts.

“It wasn’t just teachers. It was everyone in the building: Custodians, cooks, bus drivers,” he says. “We’re the front line. If more teachers have a better understanding of this, the easier it can be.”

Global Cyber Alliance (GCA) Cybersecurity Toolkit for Small Business (And Can be Useful for Schools)

<https://gcatoolkit.org/smallbusiness/>

GCA partnered with the Center for Internet Security (CIS) to provide this education. They have a number of Toolboxes schools could use to help increase their cybersecurity preparedness:

- Know What you Have: Inventory of Devices and Applications
- Update your Defenses: Updates, patches, and vulnerability management
- Beyond Simple Passwords: Passwords and two-factor authentication
- Prevent Phishing and Viruses: DNS security, anti-virus, and ad blockers
- Defend Against Ransomware: Create backups

School IT personnel would benefit the most from this information. If you have a school or campus IT professional, STIC offers a Cyber Security Information Sharing Program. To join, please email: ISP.SchoolSafety@illinois.gov on how to sign up.

School Safety Newsletter

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