



# School Safety Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 3

October 2017

## Schools Have Become the Latest Target of Cyberattacks

Market Place, October 13, 2017

<https://www.marketplace.org/2017/10/13/world/school-cyberattacks>

An entire school district in Flathead Valley, Montana, shut down for days after hackers targeted several schools, sending death threats to students and staff, and threatening to release sensitive personal information unless a ransom was paid in the online currency bitcoin. More than 30 schools and a community college closed for three days, affecting over 17,500 students.

For Superintendent Steve Bradshaw, it all started with a text message from an unknown number.

"I got a very threatening message," said Bradshaw, head of schools in Columbia Falls, Montana. "It said something to the effect that I wasn't going to see him coming and that I would pay. It was fairly threatening."

And that was just the beginning. Soon, threatening text messages spread across the Flathead Valley to school staff, parents and students. Messages with explicit threats to students.

"That they were going to splatter the blood of our children all over the hallways and things like that," Bradshaw said. "Fairly, fairly dark messages." At that point, Bradshaw and other school officials in the area made a decision: Close the schools.

And as threatening messages continued to spread, people in the rural Montana area had two questions on their mind: Who is this? And why are they doing it?

"It had me bothered enough that I actually had my shotgun in the bedroom," Bradshaw said. "I've never done that before."

School was then cancelled for a total of three days. Activities were cancelled over the weekend. And over at the local paper, things were in a flurry.

The suspects

"As a reporter, I was investigating and reporting on this, too," said Dillon Tabish, a reporter for the local Flathead Beacon newspaper. "And we actually got contacted by the suspects." Tabish began an electronic message interview with the suspects. "And kind of unfortunately got to see the kind of gruesome stuff that they were saying," Tabish said.

From the Flathead Beacon:

*The individual said on multiple occasions in various ways that he or she intended to kill people in large numbers. The suspect said they were heavily armed with "extensive training."*

*"If you know anything about military weapons ... it should scare your region," the person said*

*When asked again why he or she was targeting the Flathead Valley, they responded that they wanted to scare people and harm as many people as possible.*

*"I wanted the public to exist in a state of fear before I make my move. This will allow the government protecting your children to look poorly in the light of the public," the suspect said.*

*The individual later elaborated, "The quaint, small, backwoods region of the US like yours is prime hunting grounds. This incident is the last thing you will expect to happen here."*

*Protecting our  
future through  
information  
sharing*

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## Schools Have Become the Latest Target of Cyberattacks (Continued)

Soon, authorities linked the source of the threats to an overseas hacking organization that identifies itself as TheDarkOverlord Solutions. Authorities tied that group to high-profile hacking incidents, including a breach of Netflix.

The group sent a ransom letter to members of the Columbia Falls school board and superintendent, demanding payment in bitcoin. Otherwise, they threatened to release sensitive personal information hacked from school servers.

In the letter, the group laid out three ways the district could pay the bitcoin ransom: in one lump sum at a certain rate over a year, or at lesser rate over six months if a school staff member agreed to "write us a five-page essay about his personal experience and emotions throughout this ordeal."

### **Why target a school?**

The Montana school district didn't pay the ransom. The FBI and other law enforcement continue to investigate that case. The district is beefing up its cybersecurity. And, after three days, classes resumed at schools across the Flathead Valley.

But they're not alone. Schools in Texas, Iowa and Alabama also say they have been hacked by The DarkOverlordSolutions.

Which raises the question: Why target a school?

"They just sit on a wealth of information," said Michael Kaiser, executive director at National Cyber Security Alliance. "If you think of what a school has about the students, the parents, the teachers. It's an incredible amount of data which is incredibly valuable to cyber criminals."

And beyond that, cash-strapped schools might not have the best resources to protect that data.

"I think, you know, there's also a mistake that sometimes schools may make, which is they think, 'Oh, well, why would I be a target?' " Kaiser said. "And I think they have to understand that they're not always being targeted directly."

Often hackers send out wide phishing scams. All it may take is for someone to click on a link.

"Sometimes people think, 'Oh, I'm not going to be targeted' but they need to understand they're not always targeted," Kaiser said. "Sometimes they're just being swept up."

To read more about the cyberattack to the school district in Flathead Valley, including the original 7 page ransom letter sent to the school board, visit: <http://flatheadbeacon.com/2017/09/18/authorities-overseas-hackers-seeking-extort-community-cyber-threats/>

## Active Shooter School Bus Safety

WTVY.com, October 17, 2017

<http://www.wtv.com/content/news/Active-shooter-school-bus-safety--451337653.html>

It was January of 2013 when a gunman shot and killed a school bus driver in Midland City and held a 5-year-old hostage in a bunker for days.

To prevent situations like that one from happening, Gary Moore, a retired highway patrol captain, is sharing what he knows all across the country.

"When I first started doing this, the sheriff told me that if he can save another bus driver's life through my program, he wants to be a part of it," said Moore.

Gary Moore has worked as a safety coordinator with the Missouri School Board Association's Center for Education Safety for the past four years. During that time, he's given nearly 200 presentations on active shooter school bus safety. He has three main points for school bus drivers, administrators, parents and even children.

"If I can give you eight hours on one topic and one topic only, it would be communication skills."

Moore says in a threatening situation, keep your voice low and slow. If you don't, it could result in a physical confrontation.

"You want to prepare for the worst and hope for the best, and you do that by training," said Sheriff Wally Olson.

Moore's second piece of advice: "Everyone has a range in their head of what they think is normal. If it jumps outside your range of normal it becomes a JDLR," which stands for, "just doesn't look right."

## Monthly Webinars!

First Wednesday  
of Every Month

at 10 am

(Except January,  
July, and  
August).

## Next Webinars

Wednesday,  
November 1,  
2017

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  
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state.il.us

## Active Shooter School Bus Safety (Continued)

So if someone appears to be following your bus, circle the block a few times and if they're still following you, call law enforcement and wait for them to show up.

"Our drivers need to say, "This doesn't look right." You need to document it and report it to the supervisor. It may go to the level of law enforcement or maybe it does not."

Next, if someone doesn't seem right, watch their hands. If they use them to express themselves and their hands suddenly disappear, they could be going for a weapon.

"If they keep going back to that same part, something there is important. Is it a gun, drugs, knife or money? How many times a day do you touch your cell phone in your pocket to make sure it's still there?"

Moore says, so far, they've taught 17,500 drivers across the country and in Canada.

### Illinois Has Third Most Incidents of Violence, Threats So Far This School Year

Illinois News Network, October 9, 2017

[https://www.ilnews.org/news/schools/illinois-has-third-most-incidents-of-violence-threats-so-far/article\\_88277bbe-ab6d-11e7-9e93-e76eda646e2a.html](https://www.ilnews.org/news/schools/illinois-has-third-most-incidents-of-violence-threats-so-far/article_88277bbe-ab6d-11e7-9e93-e76eda646e2a.html)

In just the first few weeks of school this year, only two states have experienced bomb or violent incident threats at schools more often than Illinois.

Last week, four Springfield public schools were evacuated after bomb threats. That was just a few weeks after another public school in the capital city was evacuated, also because of a bomb threat. The threats were fake.

Dr. Amy Klinger, director of programs at Educator's School Safety Network, said in just 20 school days, Illinois had nine threats and incidents overall, third most in the nation.

"These threats and incidents are occurring nationally," Klinger said, "but Illinois does for whatever reason sort of rise to the top here in terms of getting off to a rocky start so far for the school year. And in our data from last year, these threats have been sort of ongoing."

Klinger's group said in the 2016-2017 school year, Illinois ranked No. 7 with 92 threats of violence and five actual incidents of violence impacting more than 104 schools. And as of Oct. 1 this year, the group said, "Illinois is third in the nation in terms of threats and incidents of violence in school. This is a disturbing trend that appears to be continuing into the current school year."

California and Pennsylvania have had the highest number of incidents so far this year.

Klinger said threats should be taken seriously.

"But that does not equate with mass hysteria, panic, evacuation, cancel school, stop learning, have every firemen within 20 miles sitting on campus," she said, noting that a lot of protocols are outdated.

"They are based on the 1984 bomb threat ... where a kid is calling a bomb threat from a pay phone because they're trying to get out of an algebra test," Klinger said. "Today, the vast preponderance of [threats] come from social media, and if they're not from social media they're found in the restroom."

Knowing what to take seriously is important.

"There are very different levels of threats. When you find a caller that says there's a bomb in this location going off at this time because I hate this because of that reason. That's a much more valid threat than some kid misspelling 'bomb' written somewhere on the bathroom stall," she said.

The reason people make bomb threats vary, as do where they come from, Klinger said. It could be a student who finds the chaos of teachers and public safety personnel freaking out "way more exciting than ... first period french class." That could lead to copycat threat-makers from within the school.

But threats could also be from an external actor.

"Someone who wants to create chaos and fear," Klinger said, "and mess with what's happening in the structure, so we have these outside actors doing this as well."

Springfield Police arrested a 14-year-old student after last week's threats.

Sangamon County First Assistant State's Attorney Dan Wright wouldn't speak about the details of that case, but said communicating a knowingly false threat could lead to prison time and fines.

"That is a class three felony," Wright said. "The potential penalties could range anywhere from a term of probation to a term of 2 to 5 years in the



**Mia Ray Langheim**  
School Intelligence  
Officer

## Illinois Has Third Most Incidents of Violence, Threats So Far This School Year (Continued)

Department of Corrections.”

The fines could be up to \$10,000, or more.

“There’s also a specific provision [in the law],” Wright said, “that relates to mandatory reimbursement of a school district’s, or emergency response personnel, [costs] associated with the response to that kind of a threat.”

Klinger said schools need more training to avoid the cost of precious and limited public safety resources.

“Think of the amount of resources that are being consumed every time that you have a bomb threat,” Klinger said. “Instruction is stopping, parents are upset, fire, rescue, EMS, law enforcement, all those folks are being used up so there’s all of these resources being expended and for just a fraction of this cost you can train people.”

But bomb threats aren’t the only concern. A student was injured last month in a school shooting in Mattoon. An East St. Louis high school was placed on a soft lockdown last month because of a gun threat; and shooting threat in Metamora canceled class last Tuesday.

Ultimately, Klinger said there’s never a one-size-fits-all solution.

## **'If you want to be famous you see this as a valid way to go down in history': Crime expert warns of copycat attack after Las Vegas massacre as he reveals one in six shootings are caused by the 'contagion effect'**

Daily Mail, October 3, 2017

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4944110/Crime-expert-warns-copycat-attack-Las-Vegas.html>

- Dr Wayne Petherick says copycat attack could follow mass shooting in Las Vegas
- The criminologist says the 'contagion effect' causes one in six mass shootings
- Perpetrators can be motivated by a desire for fame after seeing news coverage
- The effect is especially strong for workplace shootings and for school shootings

A crime expert has warned Sunday night's horrific massacre in Las Vegas could be followed by a copycat attack.

Associate Professor of Criminology at Bond University Dr Wayne Petherick said the 'contagion effect' is to blame for one in six mass shootings.

Perpetrators of such attacks can be driven by a desire for fame, Dr Petherick told Andrew Bolt on Sky News. 'If your thing is becoming famous and you see this guy's name repeated ad nauseam in every news outlet in virtually every country around the world you see this as a good or a valid way to become famous, to go down in history,' he said.

'So that increases the likelihood of that happening. The research on this is actually pretty clear and these type of events do actually spawn other events.'

Dr Petherick said the risk of another shooting increased immediately after a mass shooting such as the one in Las Vegas.

The effect can be seen on both school shootings and workplace shootings, and means roughly one in six shootings in triggered by a previous one.

'There's basically a one to five effect, so for every five shootings we see an added shooting on that,' the crime expert said. For workplace shootings the contagion effect is even stronger - responsible for one shooting for every three others.

The Poynter Institute recommends media outlets avoid glorifying mass shooters and naming them too often in order to minimize the impact of the contagion effect.

### **School Safety Newsletter**

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