

On The Alert!

Date: October 12, 2016
Attention: ASCIP Members
Affected Department: Risk Management/ Administrators/ Teachers
Applicability: K-12 Districts and Community College Districts

Clown Sightings and Mass Hysteria

The recent media attention to clown sightings and threats via social media have fueled growing concern among school districts and colleges throughout the country. Some schools have had to lockdown, and individuals have been arrested. Closer to home, a few ASCIP members have experienced incidents in which clowns were loitering near school sites.

Clown sightings are nothing new and can be traced back decades. The current phenomenon of clown sightings started in South Carolina in mid-August wherein reports were made that clowns were lurking in the woods outside of Greenville. One woman filed a report with the sheriff because her son saw “*clowns in the woods whispering and making strange noises,*” according to the incident report. At the time, it seemed like a strange story-of-the-week. Instead, it has served as the catalyst for broad, top news stories across the country. Since this initial incident, there has been a rash of clown sightings, most likely due to copycat pranksters who decided to start celebrating Halloween early this year.



Source: <http://fox61.com/2016/09/07/three-more-creepy-clown-sightings-reported-in-north-carolina>

Although this may sound alarming, local law enforcement agencies have not found any of the threats to be credible concerns to schools or to students. Nevertheless, it is important for districts to remind their students to refrain from issuing posts on social media that could be interpreted as a threat, even as a joke. Equally, it is important to remind them to be responsible users of social media, be helpful to the authorities, and to not perpetuate hoaxes.

In the event of incidents on or near school sites, members should work closely with local law enforcement to seek to assure the safety and security of students and staff. Additionally, members should keep parents and other stakeholders updated if incidents occur and new information arises.

Links:

- http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/31/us/creepy-clown-sightings-in-south-carolina-cause-a-frenzy.html?_r=0
- [The Definitive Map of America’s Creepy Clown Epidemic | Atlas Obscura](#)
- <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-creepy-clown-sightings-threats-california-20161005-snap-story.html>

For guidelines on electronic devices: <http://ascip.org/risk-services/guidelines-best-practices/>

Please contact your ASCIP risk services consultant at (562) 404-8029 to discuss further.