



Public Report Regarding Social Media Threats

Date of Incident: October 16, 2023

Primary Affected Campuses: Lehman High School (LHS) & Hays High School (HHS)



The following information was obtained by the HCISD District Safety & Security Department. A review of the district and campus response was completed for this incident. This document contains a summarization of the debrief, but not all details. This is an active criminal case and some information is considered confidential safety and security specific.

Event Overview:

On October 16, 2023 at 10:25 a.m., Hays CISD received contact from the Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC) regarding a social media threat that was circulating in the Central Texas area. The threat was non-specific and did not mention any school, area or persons. Within two minutes of receiving the information from ARIC, Lehman High School (LHS) contacted Safety & Security about the exact reported threat being circulated on their campus. Local law enforcement was actively investigating the incident and how it began circulating at LHS. The incident was cleared at 11:25 p.m. as a hoax with no threat found in the area by responding law enforcement.

At 11:28 a.m. a second social media threat began circulating within Hays CISD with references specific to "Hays" threatening violence at "1:30". The threat was received at Hays High School (HHS) and staff notified district administration of the posting that was spreading rapidly throughout the campus. Law enforcement was investigating the incident. This wording evolved and was misquoted by persons on social media accounts to be specific to "Hays High School". The general threat affected campuses district-wide but the two most affected were LHS and HHS.

EVENT TIMELINE	
TIME	NOTES
0800	LHS received a report of a circulating social media threat that was forwarded from a campus student to their parent to the campus. The campus and law enforcement began an investigation.
1025	District Safety & Security (S&S) received intelligence information regarding a suspected social media threat that was circulating that had originated outside of the immediate area. The threat was deemed "Not credible" by law enforcement for our area.
	<i>**The threat originated in New York and was distributed to areas including: Houston, Austin, San Marcos and Hays County.</i>
1028	LHS contacted S&S about the threat and the arrival of parents beginning to arrive at the campus to check out their students for safety reasons.
1100	Information was received that the alleged threat was a hoax via law enforcement sources.
1100	Campus officials and district officials coordinated a district statement that was disseminated regarding the investigative findings.
1105	Parents lined up at LHS checking parents out of school in anticipation of the impending "threat". Many students left or were instructed to leave campus by their parents with no district accountability.
1125	District message is distributed through the Office of Communications via all HCISD distribution platforms of the hoax threat.
1128	A second social media threat began circulating specific to "Hays" with a time of violence indicated to be "1:30" <i>The threat appeared to originate at HHS and quickly spread throughout the district.</i>
1235	HHS School Resource Officer (SRO) received information from HHS students about the possible identity of a fellow student who created and distributed the "threat".
1245	The SRO and campus administrators retrieved the student for an interview.
1300	HHS SRO and staff interviewed the student who admitted to creating and distributing the social media threat for "fun".
1305	<i>Not related to the incident but has a significant impact on the campus population:</i> Fire alarm activation and subsequent evacuation at HHS school due to a student "vaping" in a campus restroom.
1315	Parents lined up at HHS checking parents out of school in anticipation of the impending "threat". Many students left or were instructed to leave campus by their parents with no district accountability.
1330	Designated time of the threatened violence at "Hays"
1600	Coordinated statement between law enforcement and the district was distributed to the community. <i>*This delay allowed law enforcement the time needed to investigate the incident and maintain the integrity of the evidence sought to hold the appropriate parties responsible for the criminal law violation.</i>
10/17	Law enforcement distributed a statement regarding the detention of a juvenile offender for the second threat. The district shared this statement along with district messaging regarding the event.

As is policy for HCISD, transparency is key to a trusting relationship with our community; however, it is imperative that correct information is disseminated. This often requires communication between agencies to obtain the full report of events and may be perceived by the community as “not fast enough”.

The following details the areas identified during our debrief of the incident in which the district and the campus teams can and will improve.

Improvement Areas:

- Ensure appropriate training of the Incident Command System is completed by campus administrators.
- Improved communication and coordination with outside agencies, beyond the SRO team.
- Reevaluate the need for the activation of the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) communication, when necessary.
- Maintain personnel at points of egress from the building and parking lots.
- Maintain district safety and security protocols at all times to ensure campus persons are protected, including paths of ingress and egress for responding law enforcement officers and other emergency first responders.
- Prepare a single, unified response for persons answering the campus telephone and incident personnel to ensure consistent information is being disseminated.
- Upon collaboration with the Communications Department, communicate quickly, efficiently and calmly to students and staff the status of the event.
- As soon as possible, communicate quickly, efficiently and calmly to parents and the community the status of the event. This includes collaboration with the investigating law enforcement agency.
- Repost any district communication via the campus distribution list for redundancy in the message delivery.

A comprehensive document was prepared and distributed to our campus teams to establish these expectations.

Conclusion:

Our district experienced a community response to a social media rumors that were generated in “fun” by students to elicit a response. Unfortunately, as often is seen in these types of events, people took to social media platforms to seek information and did not look to legitimate, verified official sources. This created a false narrative and erroneous information to be quickly distributed.

All emergencies, whether in the format of a drill, exercise or event are an opportunity for learning. It is imperative that the involved agencies, parties and departments debrief and train to eliminate any identified issues. A HCISD Best Practices Guideline for Responding to Social Media Threats was developed and distributed to the campuses to assist when activity such as this incident occurs in the future.

The tragedies involving active shooter events across our country have made our communities incredibly vigilant regarding perceived violence, especially at our schools. Most often, we experience circulating social media threats involving violence that stem from juveniles wishing to create a panic situation for personal reasons. These incidents bring an emotional response and illicit fear including the desire to avoid or flee the area. Parents and the community have an immediate desire to protect our children and loved ones from evil. Unfortunately, due to the high level of emotion associated with this type of threat, reactions by the community are often motivated by an immediate need to respond to an incident to “save” a loved one. While this response is completely understandable, it also carries the danger of slowing down first responders during an actual emergency. Our goal is and will always be to protect our students, faculty and staff. We practice for this within our district and with our local first responders.

We will communicate with our district community and the public as quickly as possible with verified, accurate information without compromising an investigation. While the district will never be able to eliminate false narratives, rumors, and innuendo, it will rely on the public to censor their postings and seek official sources for information. Most importantly and likely the most difficult response, be patient.

As always, we remain committed to keeping the lines of communication open. Please visit our district web page, the safety and security web page and engage via our “Hey Hays” communication tab for any comments, critiques or suggestions. Remember to add the anonymous reporting app to your phone, IWatchTX and

[See Something, Say Something, Do Something.](#)