

SWATTING CALL (HOAX THREAT) PROCEDURE FOR EMPLOYEES

PURPOSE:

This procedure outlines the steps to take in response to receiving a swatting call (hoax threat). Swatting calls are often made to non-emergency lines, such as front desk staff or non-emergency police numbers, which is the first indication that a report may be fake. Detecting a hoax from a real threat can be achieved by applying a general understanding of the swatting indicators outlined below. **If at any point a threat is believed to be real and immediate, call 911.**

EMERGENCY ACTIONS BASED ON CALL TYPE

IF SOMEONE IS CALLING TO MAKE A THREAT:

- **Alert Campus Police Immediately:** Signal a colleague to call **Campus Police at 630-466-2552** while you remain on the line. Do not hang up on the caller. **Use Appendix 1: Emergency Threat/Suspicious Call Desk Checklist** to record important information.
- **If Working Alone:** Do not hang up on the caller. Use the Emergency Threat/Suspicious Call Desk Checklist to record important information.
 - If possible: Put the caller on speakerphone and mute your line. Call **Campus Police (630-466-2552)** on your cellphone to alert them of a potential hoax threat. Then, place both phones on speaker mode and unmute the caller to continue the conversation.

IF SOMEONE IS CALLING TO REPORT AN ACTIVE THREAT (E.G., AN ACTIVE SHOOTER):

Follow the three-step protocol below and **use the Emergency Threat/Suspicious Call Desk Checklist** to record important information.

1. Call Handling & Engagement

- **Do Not Hang Up:** Keep the caller on the line as long as possible to gather information and give Campus Police time to evaluate and respond to the threat.
- **De-escalate & Document:** Stay calm, maintain a neutral tone, and write down the exact wording used by the caller. Use the Emergency Threat/Suspicious Call Desk Checklist for guidance.
- **Listen for Background Clues:** Note background noises (e.g., electronic hums, typing, traffic, or simulated gunshot sound effects) and voice characteristics (e.g., robotic, accent, young, etc.).
- **Identify Indicators of Swatting (Hoax Calls):**
 - The caller contacted a non-emergency line or front desk instead of dialing 911.
 - The Caller ID displays zeros, nines, "blocked," or irregular numbers typical of Voice over IP (VoIP) spoofing.

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- The caller's tone does not match what you would expect from someone in a real, life-threatening, or traumatic situation.
- There is a total lack of ambient background noise (e.g., no people screaming, crying, or talking).
- Background noises are inconsistent with the reported emergency (e.g., a recording of gunfire looping, or heavy typing and mouse clicking that suggests the caller is looking up information about your location online).
- The caller mispronounces names of campus buildings or location-specific titles.

2. Questioning (Breaking Anonymity)

Federal and state mitigation strategies recommend asking repeated questions to expose contradictions in a hoaxer's story. If you are able to, you can try asking the following questions:

- *"Where are you located?"*
- *"Why didn't you call 911?"*
- *"What is your number in case we get disconnected?"*
- *"What is your name?"*
- If applicable: *"Why isn't there any noise in the background?"*

3. Evidence Preservation

- **Preserve Data:** If a threat is received via social media, email, or a VoIP web application, do not delete or forward the message. Take immediate screenshots and preserve all available data.
- **Don't Speculate:** Do not attempt to guess whether the threat is fake before law enforcement arrives. **Treat the situation as real** until Campus Police formally issue an all-clear. Avoid spreading unverified details to other staff, faculty, or students.

If the caller is reporting a threat indirectly: (e.g. someone calls Waubonsee and threatens another location, a threat for our college is reported to a separate location, or a threat is made broadly to similar institutions like libraries, schools, etc.)

- Call Campus Police and follow the same steps listed in sections 1-3 above.

Resources:

- Guidance to Educational Institutions on Swatting Threats: <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2026-09-25/guidance-educational-institutions-swatting-threats>
- Department of Homeland Security Guidance: [Swatting Calls and Hoax Threats](#)
- Appendix 1: Emergency Threat/Suspicious Call Desk Checklist (see following page).



Emergency Threat / Suspicious Call – Desk Checklist

- KEEP THIS FORM NEXT TO YOUR TELEPHONE: It is important to write the caller's words as close to verbatim as possible.
- STAY CALM. LISTEN.
- Keep the caller on the line as long as possible.
- Do not hang up unless the caller disconnects or an emergency requires you to do so.
- Do not volunteer information about yourself, the College, or emergency response procedures.
- Write down the caller's exact words whenever possible.
- Notify Campus Police IMMEDIATELY **(630-466-2552)**.
- DO NOT erase, discard, or alter these notes. Provide the completed form to Campus Police.

1. CALL INFORMATION

Date: _____ Time Call Started: _____

Time Call Ended: _____

Telephone/Extension Where Call Was Received: _____

Number Displayed on Caller ID: _____

Phone number caller gave you (if different): _____

Name of person receiving call: _____

Department/Office: _____

2. CALLER INFORMATION

Name the caller provided: _____

Phone number caller provided: _____

Location/address caller provided: _____

Caller appeared to be: Male-sounding / Female-sounding / Unable to determine

Approximate age, if apparent: _____

Accent or distinctive speech? _____

Speech characteristics noticed: _____



Emergency Threat / Suspicious Call – Desk Checklist

3. WHAT DID THE CALLER SAY?

WRITE THE CALLER'S WORDS AS CLOSE TO VERBATIM AS POSSIBLE. Do not summarize if you can record the exact wording.

4. TYPE OF THREAT

Active shooter / Bomb / Person with a weapon / Hostage / Assault / Fire / Chemical-hazard / Other emergency / Suspicious activity

What specifically did the caller say would happen?

IF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER / VIOLENCE IS MENTIONED

Where is the person? _____

Where are they going / last seen? _____

What weapons were mentioned? _____

How many people were mentioned? _____

Did caller identify anyone by name? _____

IF A BOMB / EXPLOSIVE DEVICE IS MENTIONED

Where is the device located? Building/Room/Area/Specific location _____

When will it explode? _____

How much time remains? _____

What does the device look like? _____

What type of device is it? _____

Why was the device placed? _____



Emergency Threat / Suspicious Call – Desk Checklist

5. BACKGROUND SOUNDS

Other voices, Traffic, Music, Television/radio, Machinery, School/campus sounds, Sirens, Dogs/animals, Construction, Other

Describe anything unusual you heard:

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Did the caller identify themselves or an organization? _____

Did the caller make demands? _____

What were the demands? _____

Did the caller provide a reason or motive? _____

Any other important information: _____

7. AFTER THE CALL - DO THIS IMMEDIATELY

CALL CAMPUS POLICE: **630-466-2552**

Identify yourself and relay the information VERBATIM.

Tell Campus Police the telephone number displayed on Caller ID.

Do not discard these notes.