



# SCHOOL SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS PACKET: Emerging Threats and Trends Winter 2020

JANUARY 2020



**WE ARE WASHINGTON** GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**DC** MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency**

Muriel Bowser  
Mayor



Dr. Christopher Rodriguez  
Director

January 29, 2020

Dear District Educators,

The District of Columbia's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) and the National Capital Region Threat Intelligence Consortium (NTIC) are pleased to introduce our new podcast, "HSEMA Off the Record." The podcast series focuses on the innovative ways HSEMA is working to build a safer, stronger, and more resilient DC. In each episode, we go behind the scenes to talk directly with the men and women responsible who prepare for and respond to emergencies in the District. We examine the history of the emergency management field and homeland security profession, discuss the integration of emergency management and threat intelligence, and report on ways the District's emergency managers meet challenges head on.

"HSEMA Off the Record" can be found anywhere you listen to podcasts, including [ready.dc.gov/offtherecord](https://ready.dc.gov/offtherecord). I encourage you to submit suggestions or topics that you would like to see featured on the podcast by submitting them [here](#). At HSEMA, we are dedicated to providing timely and relevant information to our education partners, parents, guardians, and students through multiple platforms, including our new podcast, school security packet, and our website, [ncrintel.org](https://ncrintel.org).

Below please find the third edition of HSEMA's school security packet for the 2019-20 school year. I encourage you to participate in this initiative and welcome your feedback and suggestions for product topics for future security packets via [nticpsc@dc.gov](mailto:nticpsc@dc.gov). We hope these school security packets help facilitate meaningful conversations between educators, school personnel, students, and families.

Respectfully,

Dr. Christopher Rodriguez  
Director



# SCHOOL SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## TRAININGS

### STOP THE BLEED

On behalf of the AAMC Department of Surgery and the James and Sylvia Earl Simulation to Advance Innovation and Learning (SAIL) Center, we invite all members of the community and AAMC employees to participate in Stop the Bleed, a course designed to provide everyone with the basic skills required to control massive bleeding. Taught by surgeons representing the general surgery, acute care surgery, and surgical intensive care services, this course offers the opportunity to learn valuable life-saving skills from experts in the field.

February 17, 2020

March 16, 2020

April 20, 2020

May 18, 2020

June 15, 2020

August 17, 2020

September 21, 2020

October 19, 2020

November 16, 2020

December 21, 2020

[SIGN UP HERE](#)

## MAIN ARTICLES



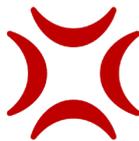
**DC Not Immune from Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation**

4



**Securing Your Personal Safety in Rideshare Vehicles**

5



**Racially Motivated Violent Extremists: Inspirations and Materials**

7



**Environmental Protest Groups: Tactics and Terms**

9



**Medical Organizations Caution Use of At-Home Food Sensitivity Test Kits**

11



**Misinformation and Disinformation During Disasters**

12



**Education Sector Remains at High Risk of Ransomware Attacks**

14



**NTIC Product Satisfaction Survey**

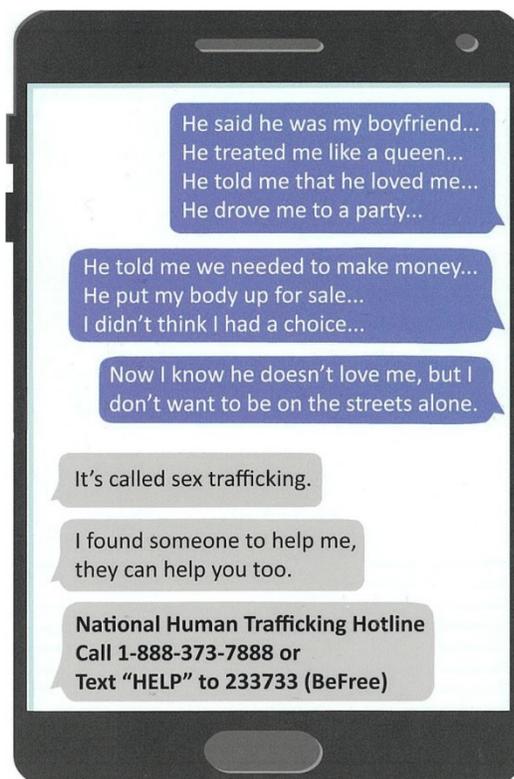
16



## DC Not Immune from Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation

*School faculty and administrators should be on the lookout and report “red flags” of human trafficking and child exploitation; doing so can prevent trafficking and even save lives.* Child predators often target children and young adults online and through social media applications, attempting to befriend potential victims before luring them into an exploitative relationship. Victims of human trafficking are difficult to identify, and many cases likely go unnoticed and unreported.

- The National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) notes in 2018, 84 cases<sup>1</sup> of human trafficking were reported to the hotline involving the District of Columbia. Sex trafficking and labor trafficking accounted for 88 percent of the cases reported in the District.
- In July 2019, authorities announced the arrest of five people involved in a sex trafficking ring in various parts of the District. Between April 25 and May 16, the perpetrators knowingly recruited and coerced children to perform commercial sex acts—any sex act where something of value is given to or received by any person. They have all been charged with “Sex Trafficking of Children.”
- Various government and non-governmental organizations provide resources and trainings to help the public raise awareness and identify signs of human trafficking. The links to these resources can be found below:



(Source: Karl A. Racine, Attorney General for the District of Columbia)

### Additional Resources:

- [National Human Trafficking Hotline \(NHTH\)](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Resource Center \(NHTRC\)](#)
- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children \(NCMEC\)](#)
- [United to End Human Trafficking \(UNITAS\)](#)
- [DC Victim Hotline](#)



<sup>1</sup> According to the NHTH, cases are defined as situations of human trafficking that involve one or more victims.



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

January 29, 2020

## Intelligence Bulletin

Product No. 2020-01-016  
NTIC SIN No. 6 | HSEC No. 6

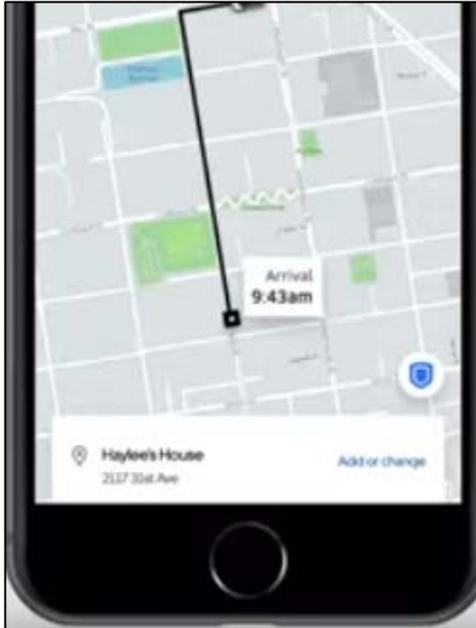
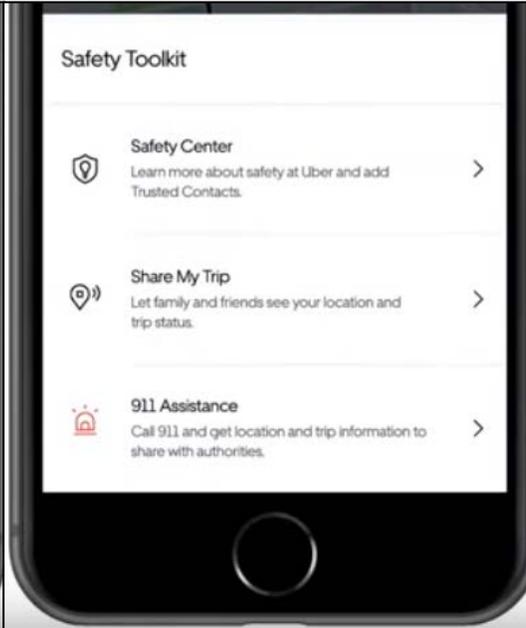
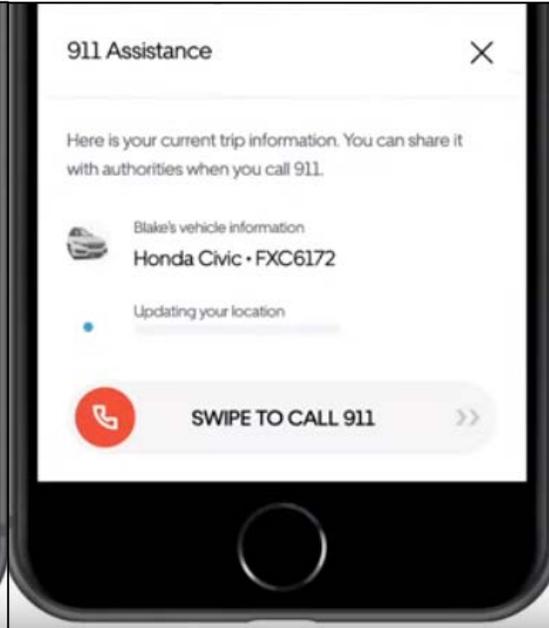
### Securing Your Personal Safety in Rideshare Vehicles

Uber’s recently released, first-ever [Safety Report](#) reveals nearly 6,000 driver and passenger reported sexual assault incidents in the United States in 2017 and 2018. Data in the report covers three categories of critical safety incidents—motor vehicle fatalities, fatal physical assault, and sexual assault—reported to Uber over a 21-month period and includes incidents where either drivers or passengers were victims. According to Uber, of the estimated 3.1 million daily trips in the United States during this period there were 9 reports of a critical safety incident per day. *The incidents of sexual assault highlight the importance of adopting personal safety measures when using rideshare services.*

- Uber’s report included five categories of sexual assault, noting 2,936 incidents in 2017 and 3,045 in 2018; most reports were of non-consensual touching of a sexual body part.
- Of the 19 murders that occurred in Uber rideshares during the time frame, seven victims were drivers, eight were passengers, and four were described as third parties, such as bystanders.
- There were 107 fatal crashes reported, including incidents where passengers were struck exiting the Uber vehicle and cases of driver negligence.
- The report also included information on Uber’s new safety measures and requirements, including an In-App Emergency Button that connects passengers to a 911 call center, a share my trip/follow my ride feature, and automated technology that periodically checks drivers’ driving records and criminal history, along with more extensive safety trainings.

Rideshare Safety Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait for your ride in a safe, well-lit place (inside, if possible).</li> <li>• Ask for your driver’s name before entering the vehicle and confirm it on your mobile app. Never provide your first name first.</li> <li>• Match the make, model, and license plate of your driver’s vehicle to your mobile app before entering.</li> <li>• Sit in the backseat of the vehicle and behind the passenger seat because this gives you two possible emergency exits and a clear view of the driver.</li> <li>• Wear your seatbelt.</li> <li>• Ask to be dropped off early if anything about the ride or the driver makes you feel uncomfortable.</li> <li>• Notify your friends, family, and colleagues know when you are traveling.</li> </ul>



**Step 1. Open the Safety Toolkit****Step 2. Select 911 Assistance****Step 3. Swipe to Call 911****How to Use the In-App Emergency Button**

- Tap the shield icon to access the safety toolkit in the mobile app.
- Select the “Call 911” button and you will be connected to an emergency dispatcher.
- Your trip details, including GPS location, car make and model, and license plate will become available electronically to the 911 dispatcher.

**Upcoming Uber Safety Measures**

- **Deactivation Sharing:** Uber plans to share the names of drivers it has banned for serious safety incidents with other ridesharing companies.
- **Sexual Misconduct Education for all Drivers:** In 2020, Uber will partner with the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) to expand its sexual misconduct and assault education to all US drivers.
- **Verify your Rides:** Passengers will be able to verify their rides using a 4-digit PIN that they provide their driver verbally, who will have to enter it into their own app to start the trip.
- **On-Trip Reporting:** This new feature will allow passengers to report non-emergency safety issues while in transit, rather than after their ride is completed.
- **Text to 911:** Passengers in select cities will be able to text 911 from the Uber app, allowing users to discreetly share car information, location, and direction of travel with 911 call-takers.
- **Uber Survivor Support Hotline:** Uber will partner with RAINN to provide a survivor hotline that will provide confidential crisis support and specialized services to victims.

**Report suspicious activity to Uber and through the [iWatchDC](#) platform.**



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

January 29, 2020

Product No. 2020-01-018  
NTIC SIN No. 4.2 | HSEC No. 8.5, 8.8, 8.10

## RACIALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENT EXTREMISTS: INSPIRATIONS AND MATERIALS

**Racially motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) draw ideological inspiration and operational direction from a variety of outlets, including books that advocate for white dominance and violence to achieve goals, and extremist manifestos published online.** Below is a list of commonly referenced extremist materials that inspire RMVEs and have led some to commit acts of mass violence in support of RMVE ideology.

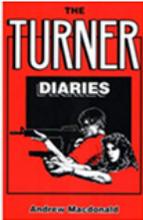
MANIFESTOS				
TITLE	"2083 – A European Declaration of Independence"	"The Great Replacement"	Dylann Roof's manifesto	"The Inconvenient Truth"
WRITER	 Anders Behring Breivik	 Brenton Tarrant	 Dylann Roof	 Patrick Crusius
SUMMARY	Anders Breivik is a neo-Nazi who killed 77 people and injured over 150 in two attacks in Norway in July 2011. Breivik described his attacks as "atrocious, but necessary" in order to end immigration in Norway. Breivik wrote an email to more than 1,000 recipients a 1,500-page manifesto, espousing his ideology and meticulously outlining his plan to save Norway from Marxism and a Muslim takeover.	Brenton Tarrant, a self-identified white nationalist, was charged with killing 51 people and injuring at least 58 when he opened fire at two mosques in New Zealand in March 2019. Prior to the attack, which he livestreamed, Tarrant posted an 87-page manifesto online, entitled "The Great Replacement," which contains racially motivated extremist narratives, and anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric.	Dylann Roof is a self-radicalized neo-Nazi who killed nine black parishioners in a church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015. After the attack, Roof confessed to the killings and justified them in a manifesto he wrote while in jail. Roof now serves as an inspiration to those who idolize white supremacist, white nationalist, and neo-Nazi ideologies.	Patrick Crusius, prior to his shooting at the Walmart in El Paso, TX, posted a manifesto on the online forum 8Chan, titled "The Inconvenient Truth," which contains racist rhetoric against Hispanics and claims his attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas. Crusius drove 10 hours from his home in Allen, TX, and told authorities he specifically targeted Mexicans.
IDEOLOGICALLY INSPIRED ATTACKS	Christopher Paul Hasson, a former Coast Guard lieutenant based in Maryland who plotted to kill prominent Democratic politicians and journalists in February 2018, studied Breivik's manifesto. Hasson stockpiled weapons and drugs, and selected targets based on Breivik's classification system. Hasson pled guilty to federal gun and drug charges. A sentencing hearing is set for January 31, 2020.	Patrick Crusius, a 21-year-old man from Texas, who opened fire in a Walmart in El Paso, TX, killing 22 and injuring 24 others, told law enforcement he was inspired by Brenton Tarrant's attack in New Zealand, citing "The Great Replacement" in his own manifesto. A grand jury indicted Crusius on one count capital murder of multiple individuals.	Jeffrey Clark Jr., a self-proclaimed white nationalist in DC, referenced Roof in his Gab account, and posted images resembling the Charleston Church shootings. Clark was arrested in November 2018 on weapons charges after his family reported him to police for increasingly violent rhetoric directed towards minorities. Clark Jr., who was sentenced to 10 months time served, was released from prison in November 2019.	Currently, no attacks have been tied to or inspired by this manifesto.





# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

## RACIALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENT EXTREMISTS: INSPIRATIONS AND MATERIALS

BOOKS				
TITLE				
WRITER	<b>Might is Right or The Survival of the Fittest</b> Ragnar Redbeard (pseudonym)	<b>The Turner Diaries</b> William Luther Pierce	<b>Siege</b> James Mason	<b>Le Grande Remplacement (The Great Replacement)</b> Renaud Camus
SUMMARY	Published in 1896, the book argues that strength and violence are necessary to determine what is morally right. It contains racist, anti-Semitic, and misogynistic rhetoric, and is popular among RMVEs, particularly neo-Nazis.	Published in 1978, the author founded the neo-Nazi National Alliance. The novel's plot centers around genocide against racial minorities and has inspired right-wing extremists to carry out violence in support of the extremist ideology. According to open source, The Turner Diaries has been linked to the deaths of 248 individuals, including Timothy McVeigh's car bombing attack in Oklahoma City in 1995 that killed 168 people.	Siege is a collection of essays written by neo-Nazi James Mason and originally published in the newsletter of the National Socialist White People's Party newsletter. It was published as a single book in 1992. The anthology consists of violent pro-Nazi and pro-Charles Manson rhetoric. It has since inspired a generation of neo-Nazis who have formed a violent online subculture called Siege Culture devoted to Mason's calls for independent terror cells to carry out a race war.	The author of this book popularized Great Replacement theory, which argues that white, European populations are endangered due to the growth and immigration of racial and ethnic minority communities. According to this theory, certain minority groups, including Muslims, are considered a specific threat to the white race in Western countries.
IDEOLOGICALLY INSPIRED ATTACKS	On July 28, Santino William Legan opened fire at the Gilroy Garlic Festival in California, killing three people, including two children, and injuring 12 others. Legan was armed with a military-style rifle and cut through a fence to avoid security. Before the shooting, he posted a picture of the festival on Instagram and said "Read Might is Right..." Legan succumbed to a self-inflicted gun shot wound to the head.	In 2015, in Flintshire, Wales, Zack Davies attacked a shopper in a supermarket with a machete and a hammer, attempting to behead him, while screaming "white power." Authorities uncovered copies of The Turner Diaries and other extremist materials related to the National Alliance in Davies' home.	In 2015, Atomwaffen Division, a violent neo-Nazi group that has been linked to three murders in 2018 alone, republished Siege online and created an online subculture dedicated to celebrating the anthology—called Siege Culture.	Brenton Tarrant's manifesto, also titled "The Great Replacement," was heavily influenced by Great Replacement theory and made references to white genocide – a second theory arguing minority populations are replacing the white race through immigration and violence against white people.





## Environmental Protest Groups: Tactics and Terms

*Environmental protest groups will likely continue to use social media and conduct demonstrations and disruption campaigns to generate attention and support for their cause nationwide.* In 2019, activists carried out demonstrations, unannounced pop-up protests, and acts of civil disobedience in major cities worldwide, including the District.

- On September 23, police arrested 32 protesters in the District for blocking roadways and key intersections and causing traffic delays during the “#ShutDownDC Global Climate Strike 2019.” Demonstrators blocked roads with human chains, cars, and vans, conducted sit-ins, and chained themselves to ladders and a sailboat to disrupt traffic flow. Major commuter routes and intersections—including intersections at K and 16th Street NW, Washington and Independence Avenue NW, and 3rd Street and New York Avenue NW—were blocked. According to authorities, the roadblocks inconvenienced “thousands of people” during their morning commute.
- In July, 17 members of the environmental activist movement, Extinction Rebellion (XR), glued themselves to each other, the underground shuttle, and the Metro entranceways in the US Capitol building. The group hoped to disrupt commuter traffic and interact with Congress members on their way to a vote. They were later arrested on various charges including crowding, obstructing or incommoding, defacing public property, and resisting arrest.

*Environmental protest groups are staging more frequent demonstrations and employing a variety of civil disobedience tactics to disrupt traffic, commuting, and normal business activities.* The groups often target high profile landmarks and the transportation sector—including bridges, waterways, public transportation networks, and public thoroughfares.

### Terms Associated with the Environmental Protest Movement

**Climate Crisis/Climate Emergency:** Environmental protest groups have shifted language from climate change and global warming to climate crisis and climate and ecological emergency to emphasize the current global impact and to encourage aggressive governmental mitigation.

**Climate Rebels:** Environmental protest groups and climate protesters refer to themselves as climate rebels.

**Climate Criminals:** Environmental protest groups’ label for corporations, such as petroleum companies and lobbyists for the oil and gas industry, they accuse of contributing to climate change.

**Crusty or Crusties:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson coined this derogatory term to refer to climate change protestors in the United Kingdom. Environmental protest groups, such as Extinction Rebellion, have since adopted the term.

**Sixth Mass Extinction:** Reference to a massive die-off of plants and animal species (10 to 100 species every year) caused, according to some scientists, by human activity.

**#ShutDownDC:** Trending hashtag on social media associated with September 23, 2019 climate protest in Washington, DC.

**#ClimateStrike:** A top Twitter hashtag in 2019, inspired by Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who called on people worldwide to walk out of school or work and participate in a climate protest.

**#FridaysforFuture:** Inspired by Greta Thunberg, who called on students worldwide to walkout of schools on Fridays to protest and demand action on climate change. Thunberg, in August 2018, stood outside the Swedish parliament holding a sign that read “skolstrejk för klimatet” or “school strike for the climate”.



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

## Intelligence Bulletin

January 29, 2020

Product No. 2020-01-055  
NTIC SIN No. 6 | HSEC No. 2, 6

Tactic	Human Chains	Sit-Ins/Die-Ins/Lie-Ins	Lock-Ons	Glue-Ons	Climbing/Rappelling of Structures	Banner Drops	Use of Large Objects
							
<b>Description</b>	Human chains are protests in which demonstrators link arms forming a physical barrier to block pedestrian or vehicle traffic.	Sit-ins, sit downs, die-ins, and lie-ins are protests in which demonstrators physically lay or sit down, occupying a location and refusing to move until demands are met.	Lock-ons involve protestors attaching themselves to doors and entrances with chains, handcuffs, bike locks, metal or PVC piping, barrels, or duct tape to obstruct access and block pedestrian or vehicle traffic.	Glue-ons involve using glue to adhere protestors to a building, vehicle, or another person to block pedestrian and vehicle traffic.	Protestors climb trees, structures, and rappel from cranes and bridges to occupy a location, and refuse to leave until their demands are met, impacting water channels and delaying construction efforts.	Protestors climb billboards, buildings, and most often bridges, to release banners with their slogans and complaints. Banners often target a specific entity such as a corporation, political group, or agency.	Demonstrators use large objects or props (for example, inflatable globes and a sailboat which have been used in DC climate protests) to spread their message, increase media attention, and block roads and major thoroughfares.
<b>Likely Impacts</b>	Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.	Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.	Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.	Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.	Blocked water channels impact local import and export of goods. Blocked roads and traffic congestion may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.	Blocked water channels impact local import and export of goods. Blocked roads and traffic congestion may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.	Blocked roadways and entrances may impede first responders' ability to access emergency scenes, delay commuter traffic, and disrupt local businesses.
<b>Examples</b>	<b>27 June 2018:</b> Protesters locked arms and blocked the street in front of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters in Southwest DC.	<b>7 October 2019:</b> XR members conducted a 'die-in' outside the New York Stock Exchange in New York City to raise awareness about climate-related disease and disasters.	<b>23 September 2019:</b> Demonstrators "locked on" to a sailboat at the intersection of K and 16 <sup>th</sup> Streets NW during the #ShutdownDC climate protest, which resulted in traffic delays.	<b>23 July 2019:</b> Protesters trying to raise awareness about climate change glued themselves to doors and walls of the US Capitol building, blocking both pedestrian and employee traffic.	<b>12 September 2019:</b> Members of Greenpeace USA were arrested after rappelling off the Fred Hartman Bridge in Houston, Texas.	<b>18 September 2019:</b> XR members conducted a banner drop on a billboard on the Brooklyn Queens Expressway in New York City. The banner stated "Act Now" along with the organization's logo and name.	<b>23 September 2019:</b> Members of XR stationed a sailboat at the intersection of K and 16 <sup>th</sup> Streets NW during the #ShutdownDC climate protest. The intersection was blocked and caused traffic delays.



## Medical Organizations Caution Use of At-Home Food Sensitivity Test Kits

**Professional medical organizations<sup>1</sup> have raised concerns about the accuracy of at-home food sensitivity kits for diagnosing food sensitivity.** Food sensitivities, unlike food allergies, occur when the body improperly processes or digests a specific food, causing stomach-related problems, such as gas, bloating, or diarrhea.

- At-home food sensitivity test kits reportedly measure levels of the antibody, immunoglobulin G (IgG), in the body and interpret the cause of the levels—often suggesting a rise in IgG levels indicates a food sensitivity. However, physicians and professional medical organizations note that high IgG levels are likely a normal response to exposure to a specific food and do not necessarily indicate food intolerance.
- In general, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not regulate at-home tests used for non-medical, general wellness, or low-risk medical purposes, which reportedly includes at-home food sensitivity test kits. This means the FDA has likely not assessed the accuracy, reliability, or clinical validity of these tests or claims the company who produces the tests make.
- Allergy experts and organizations like the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology further caution that individuals may unnecessarily remove nutritious foods from their diet in reaction to the results of an at-home food sensitivity test. Physicians often recommend an elimination diet—removing one-by-one common foods that may contribute to sensitivities—to identify potential foods causing digestive tract problems.

### How is a Food Allergy Different?

In contrast to food sensitivities, food allergies trigger an immune system response to a specific food, such as itching, tightness in the throat, asthma, or potentially life-threatening anaphylaxis. To diagnose food allergies, physicians use a blood test and/or a skin prick food allergy test to measure for the allergy-related antibody, immunoglobulin E (IgE).



Source: Healthy Debate

If you believe you are suffering from a food sensitivity, reach out to a healthcare provider to receive advice and assistance with properly diagnosing and managing your condition.

<sup>1</sup> including the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

## Misinformation and Disinformation During Disasters

January 29, 2020  
Intelligence Bulletin

Product No. 2019-12-069  
NTIC SIN No. 2 | HSEC No. 7

**False information<sup>1</sup> spread on the Internet during disasters can cause confusion, inundate government resources, be used by malicious actors to scam/steal, and even create physical threats.** During 2017, as the United States prepared for Hurricane Irma, an array of false information spread online. This included a Facebook post which falsely claimed the storm would hit Houston with a map showing a 14-day forecast—nine days longer than official forecasts. Within 24 hours, the National Weather Service publicly debunked the forecast on Twitter, but the post had already been shared over 36,000 times on Facebook. The following tips, tricks, and tools are crucial to help determine the accuracy, reliability, and bias of information posted online, particularly during disasters.



False map shared during Hurricane Irma on Facebook (Source: PolitiFact)

### What is the source?

VERIFY

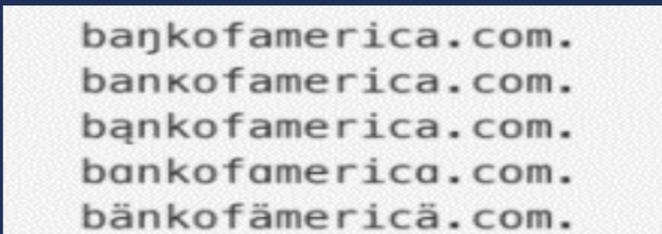
Understand the source of the information. Take time to identify information as accurate or inaccurate. To do this:

- Investigate the site containing the article or information—including its purpose and contact information—for inconsistent information.
- Use a media bias fact check extension like [Mozilla Firefox](#) or [Google Chrome](#) to denote the bias that may be present in the information.
- Check the URL to determine if the domain name has been altered to look similar to an official site, such as changing [washingtonpost.com](#) to [washjngtonpost.com](#).

RED FLAGS

Unreliable and false sources can include the following red flags:

- Incorrect logos for the news agency, company, or government agency;
- Stock photo images to represent information provided—do a reverse image search if you suspect this;
- The URL appears to be an altered domain name; or
- Vague “contact us” or “about us” sections.



Altered domain name (Source: PBS)

### Who is the author?

VERIFY

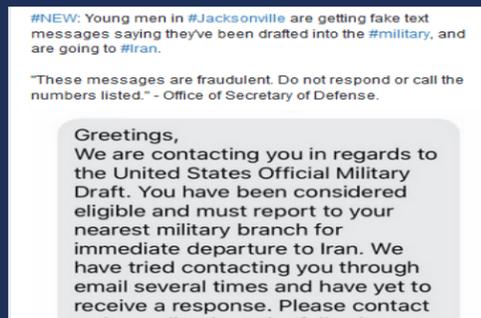
Explore the credibility of an author. Some methods to do this include:

- Locate the authors credentials and research claims the author makes about their accomplishments or organization memberships.
- If the information has been shared on social media, determine if the author has been verified or marked as official.
- Review other content published by the author for discrepancies in writing style.

RED FLAGS

Unreliable and uninformed authors may include the following red flags:

- Profiles claiming to be someone else, such as a popular reporter or author;
- Authors who lack credential information or appear to be hiding their identities; or
- Unverified social media accounts who follow few accounts but have large numbers of followers.



Verified account alerting to false draft text (Source: BuzzFeed)

<sup>1</sup> False information spread unintentionally is called misinformation, while disinformation is the spread of false information intended to deliberately mislead or deceive.



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

## Misinformation and Disinformation During Disasters

January 29, 2020  
Intelligence Bulletin

Product No. 2019-12-069  
NTIC SIN No. 2 | HSEC No. 7

### Is this the full story?

VERIFY

Reading all the information provides opportunities to identify signals of false information. Do the following to get the full story:

- Check if other news sources or government agencies have covered the story and compare the information.
- If the information has been shared in an abbreviated version on social media, search for further information or read the full article.
- Confirm the publication date of the information to ensure the information is not out of date.

RED FLAGS

Incomplete or inaccurate information may include the following red flags:

- No other sources cover the same information or contain conflicting information;
- Lack of a publishing date or outdated information; or
- Misleading headlines with different information from the overall content.



Website using an old image from to describe the Iran missile strikes  
(Source: BuzzFeed)

### Do you need more information?

RESOURCES

In addition to asking these questions, outside resources are available to learn more about mis- and disinformation and protect yourself.

- Learn the NTIC's tips for [How to Detect Disinformation Campaigns](#).
- Download a media bias fact check extension on [Mozilla Firefox](#) or [Google Chrome](#).
- Follow verified government accounts for reliable information.
- Understand how to [evaluate real or fake news](#).
- Consult [DHS resources](#) to learn more about how government agencies are working to combat mis- and disinformation during disasters.
- During a natural disaster, FEMA may create a webpage to debunk false information such as this [one](#) created during Hurricane Florence.
- When viewing images online that seem suspect, do a reverse image search to determine if the same image has been used previously. Using Google Chrome, right-click and select "search Google for image." For other web browsers, upload or paste the image using [Google's image search](#) after selecting the camera icon.

#### Hurricane Florence Rumor Control

> [Expand All Sections](#)

> [Rumor: FEMA Will "Buy Out" My Property That Was Damaged By Hurricane Florence.](#)

> [Rumor: FEMA Is Stopping Home Loans From Closing.](#)

*During Hurricane Florence, FEMA used a central website to debunk rumors (Source: FEMA)*



## Education Sector Remains at High Risk of Ransomware Attacks

*The NTIC Cyber Center assesses with high confidence that ransomware campaigns will continue to target and victimize organizations within the education sector throughout 2020.*

Ransomware is a type of malicious software, or malware, designed to extort money from victims by restricting access to a computer, mobile device, or digital files. The most common type of this malware is crypto-ransomware, which uses an encryption process to render devices and files inaccessible – essentially “locking” them – until the victim pays to obtain a decryption key. In 2019, ransomware attacks impacted 1,233 schools in 89 districts nationwide, with educational institutions second only to municipal governments as the organizations most commonly targeted by ransomware in the United States.<sup>1</sup>



Ransomware is a significant threat to school districts. Impacted schools can experience countless disruptive effects in the wake of an attack, including destroyed student grade and transcript information, lost student medical records, and inaccessible school websites and email systems. In addition to affecting critical data, ransomware attacks can also affect facility operations by disabling telephones, door access controls, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Ransomware is both a destructive and disruptive attack and several schools have been forced to cancel classes due to an infection. Ransomware attacks can also be quite

costly, as recovering lost information and rebuilding damaged systems can divert hundreds of thousands of dollars from school districts, crippling those with already limited budgets for equipment, personnel, and resources.

In addition to inaccessible files, expensive ransom payments, and recovery costs, the liability associated with the theft of sensitive data is also a concern in these types of attacks, as attackers in recent ransomware campaigns have begun threatening victims with the public release of their data if a ransom is not paid. Since schools collect and store sensitive employee and student information, the servers that house this data are attractive targets for profit-motivated cyber criminals and offer lucrative opportunities for them to commit extortion, identity theft, and financial fraud.

TLP: WHITE  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM  
CYBER CENTER

The NTIC Cyber Center recommends all educational organizations take the following steps to reduce their risk of a successful ransomware attack:

For students, teachers, and staff:

- Always use lengthy, complex, and unique passwords for each organizational account and avoid reusing passwords across multiple platforms. Consider using a reputable password manager to help generate and store secure passwords.
- Avoid opening emails, clicking links, or downloading attachments from unknown or untrusted sources.
- If you receive a suspicious email, notify your organization's IT security team immediately.
- If you suspect you have been infected with ransomware, immediately shut down your computer, disconnect it from the network, and notify your organization's IT team immediately.

For system and network administrators:

- Provide cybersecurity awareness training regularly to students, teachers, and staff.
- Keep all systems and software updated with the latest security patches.
- Use a reputable antivirus solution and keep it updated with the latest virus definitions.
- Employ a reputable email security gateway that prevents malicious emails from reaching end users.
- Disable unneeded remote access ports and disable macros on Microsoft Office software.
- Back up critical data often and keep it stored securely off the network. Regularly test data backups to ensure their integrity.
- Prepare cyber incident response plans that can be quickly referenced in the event of a major cyber incident.
- For a full list of ransomware mitigation strategies and to download a free cyber incident response planning guide, please visit [www.ncrintel.org/mitigation-strategies](http://www.ncrintel.org/mitigation-strategies).

---

<sup>1</sup> Emisoft. "The State of Ransomware in the US: Report and Statistics 2019." Published 12 December 2019. <https://blog.emisoft.com/en/34822/the-state-of-ransomware-in-the-us-report-and-statistics-2019/>



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

(202) 481-3075 | NTIC@DC.GOV

## PRODUCT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Thank you for your interest in our product. Please take a moment to complete the following survey. Your responses will assist us in evaluating the relevance, timeliness, and value of our products.

**PRODUCT TITLE:**

**PRODUCT DATE:**

**PLEASE SELECT PARTNER TYPE:**

Please check one answer for each of the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
This product increased my knowledge of an issue or topic.						
This product was timely to my needs.						
This product was relevant for my information needs.						
This product helped inform my decision making.						
How satisfied are you with this product?						

How did you read this product?						
Was the file size an issue for you when opening this product?	Yes	No				

**COMMENTS:**