



City of North Canton, Ohio

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Dedicated To Service and Protection

Media Release Update

For immediate release:

Date: March 20, 2015

Release time: 10:00 am

Released by: Chief Stephan B. Wilder

Re: February 11, 2015 shooting threat made online against the North Canton Middle School

[North Canton, OH.] On Wednesday, February 11, 2015 the North Canton Police Department began an investigation of a shooting threat made online against the North Canton Middle School. North Canton City School Administration was made aware of the message, which had been posted on the internet, which someone was going to shoot up the North Canton Middle School on Thursday, February 12, 2015. The North Canton Police Department and North Canton City School Administration responded to the seriousness of this situation involving the perceived threat to the safety and emotional well-being of families, students, faculty and staff members, by activating school crisis threat protocols and assessing the threat.

The purpose of this media release is to communicate to the residents, families, students, faculty, and staff the general effect this incident has had on the community and what has transpired with the investigation of the posting of the threat.

- First and foremost was the concern for public safety; students, faculty and staff.
- The police department empathizes with the city residents, visitors, school administration, parents, students, faculty and staff, that a crisis like this creates disruption in school operations, family and business engagement, and the demands it places on first responders regarding this incident all the while responding to day-to-day calls for service.
- The City of North Canton and the North Canton City Schools are not exempt or immune from crisis situations, whether they are the product of human error or natural causes. Through prevention and preparation training, police department and North Canton School personnel preserved a calm school environment in response to this crisis which befell families, students, faculty and staff.
- *What we know:* A North Canton Middle School student had logged on to his Ask.fm account where he saw a message posted to his account stating, "Going to shoot up NCMS tomorrow, care to be the first?" The student did not alert the authorities or bring it to the attention of any adult but instead took a picture of it and later re-posted it on his Instagram account. The message was seen by other friends of the student and they, in turn, told their parents who notified school administration and the police department.

- *The actions of the police department to date:* The North Canton Police Department, the Canton Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Law Enforcement Liaison representative from Ask.fm, have been working together to track down and identify who may have posted the threat message.
- *What we don't know:* Currently, the police department has not been able to determine the source of the threatening message or received any additional information as to whom had sent it and why it was sent to a particular student.
- *Status of the investigation:* The status of this investigation is considered inactive at this time. It remains open until such time as any additional information is received regarding the sender of the threatening message. When enough factual information is gathered to identify the sender, criminal enforcement steps will be initiated.
- Anyone who can provide information as to the sender or the origin of the threatening message should contact the North Canton Police Department Detective Bureau at 330-499-5911 or "Tip line at 330-966-3633, the North Canton City Schools Safety Hotline or safety tip line phone number at 330-966-1703, or email North Canton Police School Resource Officers at sro@northcantonschools.org.
- *Summary for families and students:* Parents need to know and understand that children can use a variety of apps to communicate online-- text, chat, meet people, and share their pictures and videos - - often times without their parents knowledge. One's safety is just as important as one's privacy. Perhaps more. Families can establish family media rules, such as checking on permissible downloading of games, apps or other internet sites. Parents can search the internet for explanations and reviews of social media sites available to youth to help them determine what is dangerous or unacceptable for their children. Take time to discuss the dangers of the apps and make sure they understand the need to keep personal information private and protect their safety.
 - Again, in light of this incident, the North Canton Police Department and the North Canton City School Administration are also asking for your help. Please take the opportunity to review general safety procedures regarding threats made at school, online or off school grounds with your child:
 - It is important for students to report their suspicions. They may feel that they are protecting a friend by not saying something, but by keeping silent they could be putting everyone, including their friend, at risk.
 - All threats, written, verbal or online, are taken very seriously. If your child hears of a threat of any sort, they should immediately report it to a parent, teacher or the police.
 - The consequences for making threats – even as a joke – are very serious. Law enforcement will not hesitate to file charges if the situation warrants it.
 - Students should never post, respond to a post or share a post dealing with a threat of any kind on social media. They should immediately report threats of any sort directly to a parent, trusted adult, teacher or the police.

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