Swatting Mitigation Strategies and Reporting Procedures

Swatting is defined as a false report of an ongoing emergency or threat of violence intended to prompt an immediate tactical law enforcement response. Swatting scenarios include bomb threats, active shooter scenarios, threats of an imminent shooting rampage, hostage scenarios, and threats involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive agents. Many incidents involve the targeted location receiving the swatting call instead of reporting the emergency directly to law enforcement agencies and an anonymous caller using a computerized text-to-speech voice.

The following indicators can be used to identify a potential swatting incident. (This is not an exhaustive list, and public and private sector partners are encouraged to contact the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security at 866-EYE-ON KY (393-6659) with lessons learned or success stories of tactics used to dispel a swatting attempt):

• The swatting call is the only incoming call to report an active shooter or ongoing emergency. If a shooting occurs or an active shooter scenario is unfolding, multiple calls from witnesses or victims are likely.

• The incoming telephone number is spoofed or blocked. Swatting calls using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services will appear as all zeros or nines, blocked, unavailable, or one of the default Skype numbers.

• The swatting call is routed to a non-emergency dispatch line. Even if using VOIP services to spoof or block their number, emergency call centers can more easily locate callers dialing 9-1-1, so swatters typically dial non-emergency lines of dispatch operations to mask their location.

• The caller's tone and background noise are inconsistent with the claimed emergency or threat. For example, the caller claims an active shooter at school, yet their demeanor is suspiciously calm, with minimal background noise.

• The caller can be heard typing or clicking a computer mouse in the background. Swatters will conduct internet searches or use online mapping and geospatial tools during the call to answer follow-up questions and provide exterior descriptions of buildings or residences.

• The caller is unable or unwilling to answer follow-up questions requesting details such as their full name, phone number, or current location.
• The caller mispronounces names such as city, street, or building names.
• The caller's story changes or escalates throughout the course of questioning.
• The caller uses specific gun names or terminology to identify their weapon. Swatting callers often refer to weapons commonly depicted in video games, such as an AR-15 assault rifle.
• Gunshots or explosions heard in the background are inconsistent with other noises or sound fake.

Mitigation
• In the event of an active threat or swatting incident, school personnel should call 9-1-1 immediately.
• In the event of a swatting incident, as well as an active threat incident, law enforcement will have control of the incident and be in command while working with school administrators and personnel.
• Swatting calls can be successfully mitigated using follow-up questioning to identify inconsistencies or weaknesses in the caller's storyline or to make the caller feel their attempt is failing. Call receivers should ask multiple questions in quick succession and repeat questions later in the call to identify inconsistencies. Suggested questions include:
    • "What is your full name?" (Ask again later during the call, specifically for a middle name.)
    • "Where are you calling from?"
    • "What is your phone number?"
    • "Why is there no noise in the background?"
    • "What is that noise in the background?" (When background noise is inconsistent with the story.)
    • "Are you targeting anyone in particular?"
    • "How did you get in the school?"

First, targeted locations should call 9-1-1 in the event of a reported emergency or threat of violence and clearly indicate if there is suspicion of swatting. If possible, keep the caller on the line and ask follow-up questions while another individual speaks to the dispatcher. Reporting information will aid in coordinating

investigations between local, state, and federal law enforcement, as well as in analyzing trends and developing best practices, which will be shared with all partners.