



GOV. PHILIP D. MURPHY | LT. GOV. SHEILA Y. OLIVER | DIR. JARED M. MAPLES

NJOHSP

OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS



NJOHSP and NJDOE Call for ‘Renewed Vigilance’ to Ensure School Safety

September 6, 2018 – Press Release

Press Contact: Patrick R. Rigby, NJOHSP
communications@njohsp.gov | 609.584.4392

Michael Yaple, NJDOE
michael.yaple@doe.nj.gov | 609.376.9072

Trenton, NJ – New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal, New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet, and New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP) Director Jared M. Maples, are calling on school communities for renewed vigilance to help ensure the safety of students and staff.

“School safety is a concern shared by all, and everyone has a role to play in helping schools foster a safe and secure learning environment,” said **Education Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet**. “The message that educators and parents need to impart upon young people is that if you hear something or see something, you need to say something.”

“The safety of our children is paramount to our overall mission,” said **Jared Maples, Director of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness**. “We will continue to prioritize suspicious activity reporting to ensure that there is a clear path to reporting and addressing issues before an incident occurs.”

The Suspicious Activity Reports filed by local law enforcement with the State surged after the shooting at a Parkland, Florida, high school in February. The number of reported school threats in New Jersey more than doubled for the 2017-18 academic year compared to the prior year. Almost three-fourths of those threats were directed at high schools and middle schools.

“We can attribute part of that increase to greater vigilance on the part of students, educators, and the community as a whole,” said **Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal**. “We don’t want school communities to fall into a sense of complacency as we start a new school year. Rather, we want to continue that heightened sense of vigilance.”

“Troopers statewide have been directed to not only visit school districts they patrol, but to familiarize themselves with districts they pass on their commute to and from work, which translates into literally hundreds of additional law enforcement officers ready to respond to a crisis at a moment’s notice,” said **Colonel Patrick Callahan of the New Jersey State Police**. “There is no greater mission than protecting New Jersey’s children, but we cannot do it alone. We urge teachers, students, faculty, and parents alike to immediately report any suspicious activity to law enforcement.”

The NJDOE and NJOHSP have been working closely with school districts on a number of safety initiatives:

-
- A recent law requires each school district to designate a school safety specialist to coordinate security programs and serve as a liaison with law enforcement and State agencies. Over the summer, hundreds of school officials attended the NJDOE's School Safety Specialist Academy.
 - NJOHSP performs in-depth school security assessments for individual schools to determine vulnerabilities, whether in the construction of the school building or in staff policies and procedures. The Office collaborates with local law enforcement and has conducted more than 100 assessments in the past year.
 - The NJDOE will continue to provide unannounced school security drill observations, where only the superintendent knows that state specialists will be on hand to evaluate strengths and areas of improvement during a school security drill. The unannounced school security drill observations have been extremely well-received by school officials; more than 850 have been conducted in both public and private New Jersey schools over the past four years. Over the same time span, the NJDOE has also conducted more than 250 trainings and presentations, and fulfilled another 300-plus technical assistance requests from individual districts.

Commissioner Repollet said school districts need to reinforce to students and parents that threatening social media posts, "jokes" of a violent nature, or drawings that imply school violence will be taken seriously and reported to local law enforcement.

###

The New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP), a Cabinet-level agency, was created in 2006. The Director serves as the Governor's Homeland Security Advisor, and is responsible for leading and coordinating the State's counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and emergency preparedness efforts while building resiliency throughout the State across all levels of government and the private sector. NJOHSP oversees and distributes discretionary State and federal homeland security and emergency preparedness funds on behalf of New Jersey. More information about NJOHSP can be found at www.njhomelandsecurity.gov.