



## City of Sonoma Police Department

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Sonoma Valley High School Threat Press Release 11/10/2023

Thursday morning (11/9/23) at approximately 9:49 am, a Sonoma Valley High School staff member received an email threat of violence to the school campus. Based on the threat received, the school staff acted immediately and in accordance with their training and procedure by placing the high school campus on a remain in classroom “shelter in place” and immediately notified the Sonoma Police Department of the threat. Due to the immediate proximity of Creekside High School, Adele Harrison Middle School, and Prestwood Elementary School, they too were placed in the “shelter in place” based on the need to protect all students and staff safety as well.

The Sonoma Police Department responded directly to the high school and met with high school officials who provided the police department with the threat they received which came in the form of an email. The threat was specific to the location of the Sonoma Valley High School, that the violence was going to be killing with a firearm, and the threat provided a time that this would occur.

Due to the threat being delivered by email, the person who sent it could not be immediately identified so law enforcement could determine if this was a legitimate plan or a hoax/threat. With the specificity of the threat, and the fact that it could not be proven to be a hoax, the Sonoma Police Department and the Sonoma Valley High School had to presume it true and provide for the immediate safety of all the students and staff on the campus.

The Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office also provided a significant response with patrol deputies, Henry 1 aerial surveillance, SWAT team deputies for the campus search, a K9 apprehension dog and a bomb detection K9 from the onset of this situation. The detectives with the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office Violent Crime Investigation Unit immediately assumed the investigation into who sent the email and continue to work on that aspect of the investigation today.

Officers from the California Highway Patrol responded and provided a great deal of support at the high school and several of the other district campuses that were not a part of the immediate threat, but law enforcement presence was important. The California State Parks Police also provided officers to assist with the containment of the high school campus. An emergency response team from the Sonoma Valley Fire Department was staged at the high school campus throughout this incident.

A search of every classroom for the firearm was conducted before the “all clear” could be given. The search concluded just prior to the scheduled release time for the day. Law enforcement and school staff remained on campus with a heavy presence until the last students had left the campus to ensure that everyone was safe. Additionally, although we did not search the other affected campuses as they were not directly mentioned in the threat, law enforcement was present on or about those campuses throughout the day.

Law enforcement must presume that every threat is real unless evidence is available to prove it false. Today, we do not know if this was a hoax or if the decisive actions of the school prevented a tragic event from occurring. When it comes to the safety of the youth, we will always error on the side of what we know to be true. These incidents can raise significant emotional responses from the students, staff and families of the students, and the community.

The police department was working directly with the high school and school district staff to ensure that appropriate messaging was broadcast to the parents and family of the students on campus, as well to the community about the situation taking place that led to the shelter in place on campus. All involved parties understand the need of parents to understand what is taking place for their children and work to provide correct and timely information. At the same time, we are working to get immediate communication to the teaching staff who are in the classrooms with the youth. The role of the teacher cannot be understated through these events and the communication that is sent to them will ensure that the kids in the classroom are confident that they are in the safest place at that moment.

To the person who sent this threat, the message did not just affect a few people. Your actions put fear in the families of the students and the community at large. It caused law enforcement agencies across the region to have to divert attention from other emergencies taking place to provide for the immediate safety of the students and staff on the high school campus. Law enforcement and the schools have direct access to a great deal of mental health support and would welcome the opportunity to help anyone that is feeling anger or hatred for any reason. Ask for help before your actions become criminal, as they have in this case.

If anyone has any information about who wrote this threat, please contact the Sonoma Police Department (707-996-3602) or the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office VCI Detectives (707-565-2185).

Press release written by Brandon Cutting, Chief of Police, City of Sonoma.