



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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To: Metro Atlanta Media

For Immediate Release

Clown Scares/Hoaxes in Paulding County

(Paulding County, GA) A number of clown related social media posts were posted this past weekend regarding threats towards schools in the Paulding County School District as well as throughout the country. Some threats stated that a clown would arrive at the school and "kidnap and kill all of the students," while another threat stated they "would be hiding in the wood line at schools." Most of the social media posts were attributed to a "clown joke," possibly linked to numerous clown sightings throughout the state and country.

These sightings have not been validated and there are no known substantiated threats to schools in Paulding County. Residents are encouraged to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to the Paulding County Sheriff's Office.

Over the last few months, "creepy clowns" have been reported throughout the United States and the world. The media has reported incidents where clowns have stood on the street not moving or speaking, to incidents where creepy clowns attempted to lure children into wooded areas. These sightings have occurred in Wisconsin, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, Missouri, Colorado, Oregon, and Texas.

Many of these reported clown sightings have little to no evidence establishing their legitimacy, but it is fueling a clown panic throughout the country. Due to the media coverage of clown sightings, many people want to become involved in the phenomenon. Over the past two weeks at least 12 people were arrested in Georgia, Alabama, and Virginia for making false reports of clown threats or chasing people while costumed.



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All of the clown threats that have been reported to the Paulding County Sheriff's Office have been investigated and unsubstantiated. Of the clown incidents that have been reported, none have actually occurred. **There have been no confirmed clown sightings in Paulding County.**

We want to encourage parents to be vigilant with their children's social media accounts. Detectives with the Juvenile Investigations Division have uncovered numerous social media posts by Paulding County students requesting clowns to come to their school. Allowing a student to have unlimited unsupervised social media access is not helping mitigate this problem.

The Paulding County Sheriff's Office is providing this press release for informational purposes only. If you see a person whom you feel is suspicious, call the non-emergency number to our 911 Center at (770) 445-2117. If you think it is a public safety emergency, dial 911 immediately.

The Paulding County Sheriff's Office and the Paulding County School District want nothing more than to keep our kids safe and give them a positive environment to learn in. These clown scares/hoaxes are doing nothing but interrupting that goal and causing unnecessary panic amongst parents, teachers, and students. Listed below are some of the laws in the state of Georgia that you could violate if you dress up like a clown and attempt to scare people, or falsely report a clown incident.

OCGA 16-11-38 Wearing a Mask/Hood (M)

(a) A person is guilty of a misdemeanor when he wears a mask, hood, or device by which any portion of the face is so hidden, concealed, or covered as to conceal the identity of the wearer and is upon any public way or public property or upon the private property of another without the written permission of the owner or occupier of the property to do so.

(b) This Code section shall not apply to:

(1) A person wearing a traditional holiday costume on the occasion of the holiday;

(2) A person lawfully engaged in trade and employment or in a sporting activity where a mask is worn for the purpose of ensuring the physical safety of the wearer, or because of the nature of the occupation, trade, or profession, or sporting activity;

(3) A person using a mask in a theatrical production including use in Mardi gras



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celebrations and masquerade balls; or

(4) A person wearing a gas mask prescribed in emergency management drills and exercises or emergencies.

16-11-39 Disorderly Conduct (M)

(a) A person commits the offense of disorderly conduct when such person commits any of the following:

(1) Acts in a violent or tumultuous manner toward another person whereby such person is placed in reasonable fear of the safety of such person's life, limb, or health;

(2) Acts in a violent or tumultuous manner toward another person whereby the property of such person is placed in danger of being damaged or destroyed;

(3) Without provocation, uses to or of another person in such other person's presence, opprobrious or abusive words which by their very utterance tend to incite to an immediate breach of the peace, that is to say, words which as a matter of common knowledge and under ordinary circumstances will, when used to or of another person in such other person's presence, naturally tend to provoke violent resentment, that is, words commonly called "fighting words"; or

(4) Without provocation, uses obscene and vulgar or profane language in the presence of or by telephone to a person under the age of 14 years which threatens an immediate breach of the peace.

(b) Any person who commits the offense of disorderly conduct shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

(c) This Code section shall not be deemed or construed to affect or limit the powers of counties or municipal corporations to adopt ordinances or resolutions prohibiting disorderly conduct within their respective limits.

16-10-26. False Report of a Crime (M)

A person who willfully and knowingly gives or causes a false report of a crime to be given to any law enforcement officer or agency of this state is guilty of a misdemeanor.