

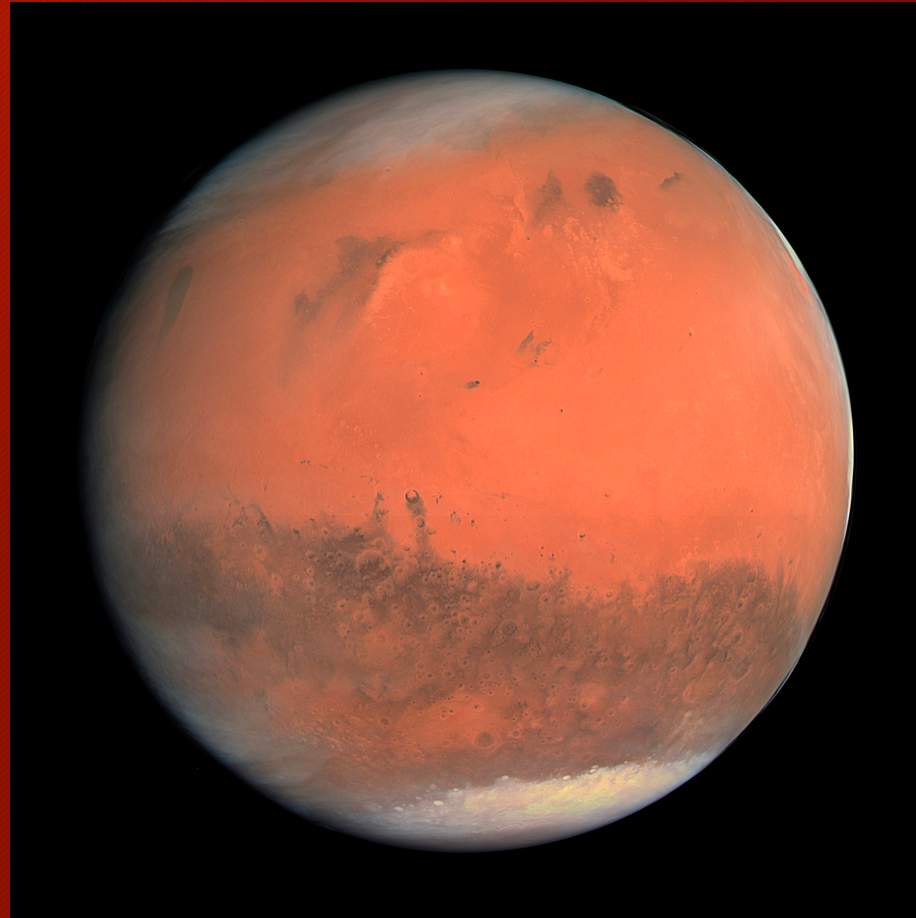
# Taking Control Online, Avoiding Secondary Incidents

Chief Michael Thompson M.A., M.Ed.

# If it Bleeds, It Leads

October 30, 1938

Several large explosions can be seen on the surface of Mars by Professor Richard Pearson an astrophysicist at Princeton University



# News Bulletins over the Radio

Meteor collides into the earth just outside Trenton, NJ. At a place called Grover's Mill

The collision can be heard for miles

Reporters race to the scene to describe the landscape



”We interrupt this program...”

Reliable witnesses  
are interviewed to  
include scientists  
who were summoned  
to the scene



# Live Broadcast

Police are on scene and are pushing the crowd back.

Yelling and disorder can be heard

The object seems to be emitting a humming sound



# Result of the live broadcast

Reports of mass stampedes

Suicides

Death threats

Law suits



<https://youtu.be/WPMMNvYTEyI>

# Sources of information



Time is not your friend



# Investigations & Responsibilities

- Police Investigation

- Takes time to conduct a thorough investigation
- Hesitant to release information that might not be accurate
- Have not had time to notify family members
- Could interfere with the investigation

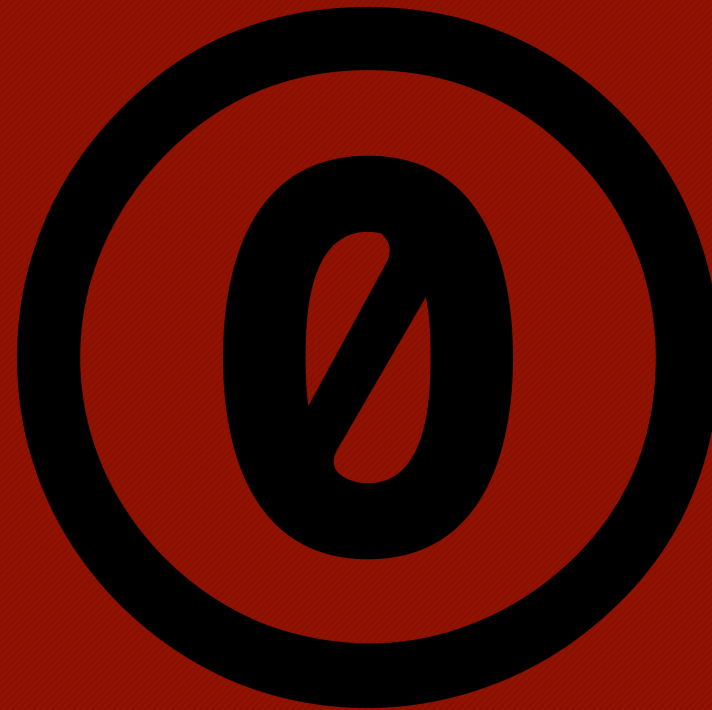
- School Investigation

- Takes time to conduct interviews
- Many times are forced to wait on police to finish theirs or at least to the point it will not hamper PD.
- Notification of parents
- Do notices need to go out to parents or community?
- FERPA/ Title IX

# Social Media Responsibilities

- School or Police
  - Must ensure the info is correct and has been verified
  - Tell what they want people to do
    - Avoid the area
    - BOLO
    - Lockdown etc.

- Public



# How Can We Control the Narrative?



ASU



October 31, 2015  
(Saturday)

- Threat is made on a online gaming chat room.
- The threat is made towards "ASU" and is not specific to a particular campus.



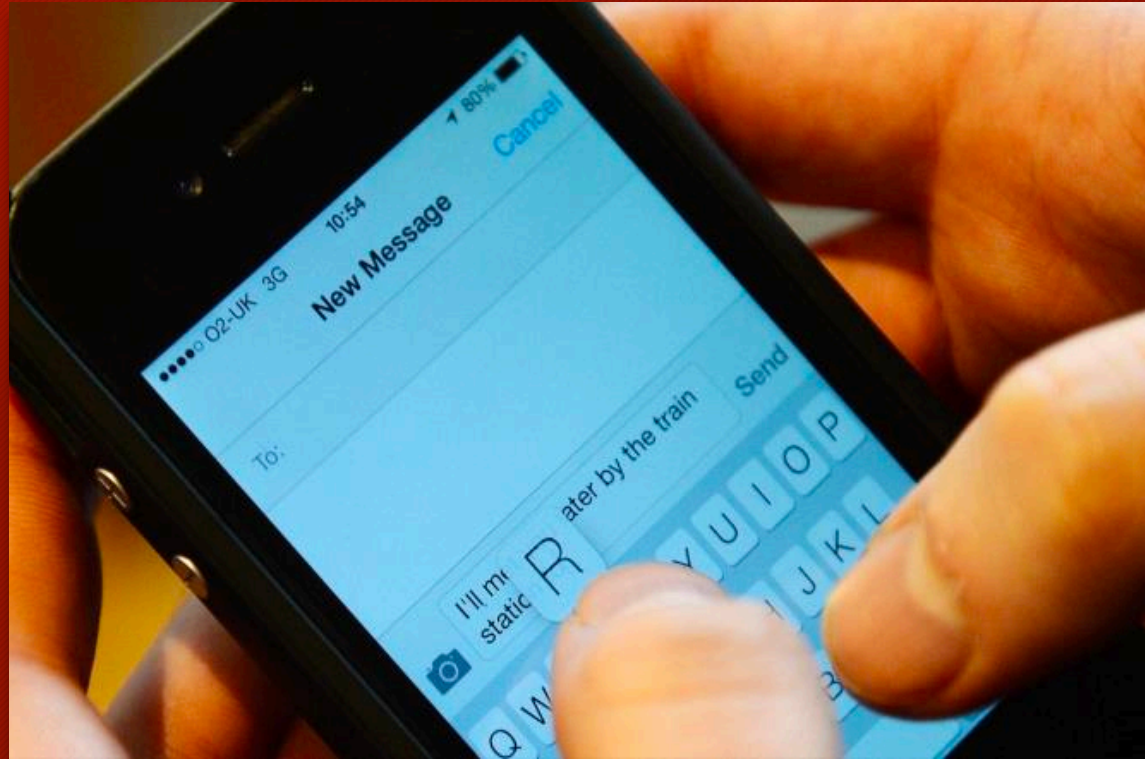
# Response

- Contacts at FBI are notified and given information to attempt to start to track the source of threat.
- Administrators are made aware of the threat and want to know if ASUPD sees it as credible.



# Response

- Information is kept confidential for 24 hours
- Fielding phone calls from every administrator who is hearing the rumor and want to make sure we are aware.



# Sunday November 1, 2015

- Professors are now calling the police department asking if classes are going to be cancelled for the day on Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Provost and President decision
- FBI has narrowed down on the possible locations of origin.
- Things starting to pick up steam



# Monday November 3, 2015

- According to threat shooting is to take place at 8:00 am.
- Local jurisdictions on possible origin are checking on possible suspects
- Social Media reaching fever pitch to include parents, students, faculty members and media.
- ASUPD requests to send out advisory stating we are investigating



# Monday November 3, 2015

- By 8:00 am suspect is located in Canada.
- Admits to crime
- No advisory sent



# Aftermath aka Self Created Incident #2

- Students and parents are sending out information through social media that is not accurate.
- Report of ASUPD arresting suspect at residence hall with a gun
- Is the campus is on lockdown?
- Why is it not on lockdown?
- What is the definition of credible?



# Aftermath aka Self Created Incident #2 cont.

- Parents are calling dispatch and flooding 911 lines
- A second request to send advisory is denied
- Fear of causing even more concern



# Monday November 3, 2015

- ASU agrees to send out media release
- This is released on social media as well



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

ASU Media Relations: [mediarelations@asu.edu](mailto:mediarelations@asu.edu)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ASU PD works with local and Federal authorities to track online threat  
*Unsubstantiated threat traced to Canadian juvenile***

*Tempe, Ariz., November 3, 2015* – Arizona State University Police, in collaboration with local and federal authorities, traced an online threat posted over the weekend to a 12-year-old in Canada late Monday.

Law enforcement officials determined through investigative work that the threat, which originated from the youth's online conversations on a gaming website, was not credible. The incident caused disruption on the ASU campus and the use of considerable resources to track it down.

The juvenile has been contacted by Canadian authorities and apologized for his actions and the disruption they caused. Because this individual is a juvenile, his name will not be released and preliminary information was that no charges would be filed.

ASU PD was made aware of the threat on Sunday with one version mentioning ASU and another referencing only a university in Arizona. ASU PD, with the aid of federal and international law enforcement agencies, traced the threat to a gaming website.

ASU PD takes the safety of the ASU and surrounding communities very seriously. Had there been a substantiated threat to the ASU community, students, faculty and staff would have been given direction through the appropriate channels on what actions to take.

We strongly encourage everyone to continue to download the free ASU LiveSafe app at [livesafe.asu.edu](http://livesafe.asu.edu). This app allows users to send anonymous tips directly to ASU PD. We also encourage everyone to review our Safety Awareness Training videos, <https://cfo.asu.edu/police-safety-training>.

ASU PD reminds everyone: If You See Something, Say Something. Never be afraid to email or call ASU PD to report suspicious activity.

# Lessons Learned

- Social Media has the ability to spread rumors and misinformation at a staggering speed



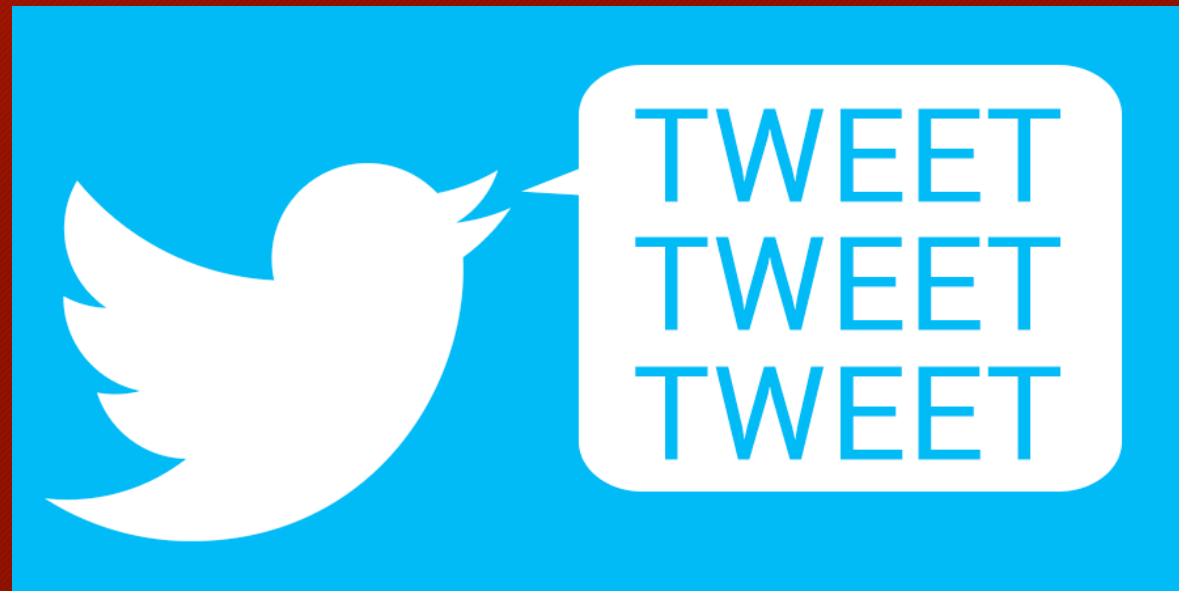
# Lessons Learned cont.

- Fear spreads faster than facts
- Fear can quickly evolve to hysteria which is fueled by social media and the news.



# How to combat misinformation Tip #1

- Be careful of initial messaging
- “We might have... vs. We have...”



# Tip #2 Avoid uncertainty or radio silence

- Say something
- Say it on your official channels.
- Say it several times
- When people are scared they will seek sources
- Will not suspend judgement waiting for you
- Social media can fill narrative gaps therapeutically
- "Like dogs"



# Tip #3- Monitor social media

- Monitor social media not only during crisis
  - Hootsuite
  - Social Sentinel
  - Correct misinformation quickly
  - Share what you can legally share



## Tip #4- Visual media is king

- If you want the message to spread fast send a picture or video
- Images are retweeted at a much higher rate than words alone.
- Infographics



# Tip #5- Prepare your team

- When crisis hits, is your team prepared and familiar with their role?
- What is the message that is to be sent?
- Who will respond to media requests?



# Tip #6 Don't overestimate

- Often organizations will overestimate the strength of their official channels
- The younger the audience the less they distinguish between news and social media
- Use different channels for different situations



# Questions