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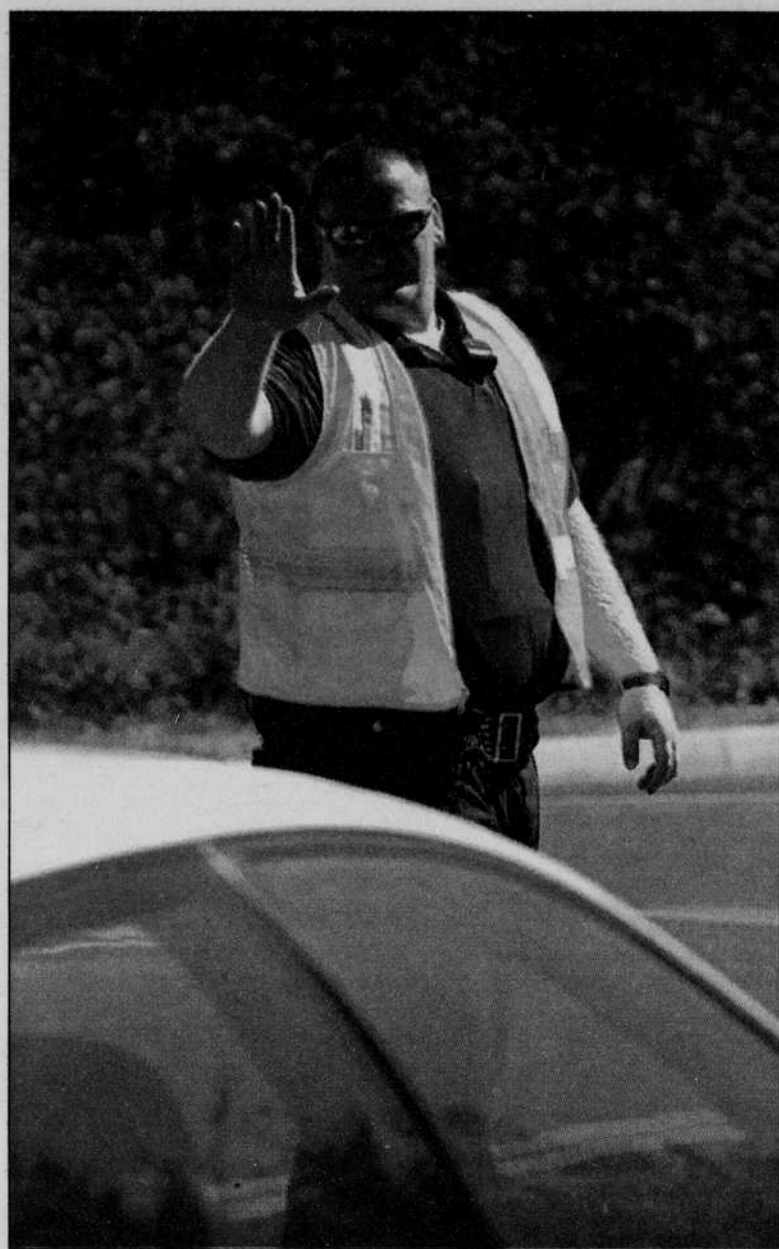
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Tim Bobosky Freelance Photographer

Lane Community College Public Safety Officer Matt Hartvigson halts traffic and turns away students arriving for their classes Tuesday morning. A bomb threat closed the campus for the day.

LCC bomb threat leads to evacuation, day-long closure

*Upon investigation, public
safety officials found no
explosive devices*

MICHAEL A. BOOTH
FREELANCE REPORTER

Hundreds of students and staff poured from Lane Community College's main campus Tuesday after an unknown caller told college officials three bombs had been placed on the campus.

Students left buildings and went out into the late-morning sun after public safety officials called for an evacuation at 10:40 a.m., 30 minutes after the threat was received.

Public safety officers conducted a systematic search of the entire campus, but found no explosive devices.

Tuesday's bomb threat was the first at LCC in four or five years, and the previous threat failed to prompt an evacuation, said Director of Health and Safety Sandra Ing-Wiese.

Within 20 minutes of the evacuation order, the campus buildings were devoid of nearly everyone, except necessary staff. Departing traffic backed up for more than half an hour from the Interstate 5 on-ramp one-quarter mile away and stretched all the way around the road on the campus perimeter.

LCC President Mary Spilde held a press conference at the main parking lot outside the administration building not long after the evacuation.

Spilde said executives decided to close the campus for the entire day so public safety officers would have time to search all buildings.

Initially, officials would not say who spoke with the caller or what the caller said. But, public radio station KLCC

later reported the caller said, "You have one hour to find three bombs." Ing-Wiese then confirmed the report and said the caller sounded like a male.

Ing-Wiese said a campus operator received the threatening call on the general campus phone line that is advertised to the public.

Campus staff members were notified of the evacuation after the administration activated their "phone tree" call list. They relied on contacted staff to spread the word. Public safety officers followed up by checking each building to ensure people had been notified and were evacuating.

LCC student Tobie Kerstetter was working at the snack bar in the Center Building when a bookstore employee told her the campus was being evacuated.

"No one said why we were evacuating, just that we had to lock up and leave the campus," Kerstetter said. "I didn't hear that it was a bomb threat until I was on the way to pick up my daughter at the child care center."

Spilde said there was no way of knowing how many students and staff were on the campus during the evaluation.

Ing-Wiese said the college is trying to trace the phone call but she isn't confident it will be successful.

"With all the throw-away cell phones these days," Ing-Wiese said, "who knows if they'll be able to trace it."

Kerstetter hopes whoever made the bomb threat will be caught and prosecuted.

"If someone did this as a lark or a joke, it's just not funny," she said. "I was freaked out because my three-year-old daughter is here at the child care center."

Michael A. Booth is a freelance reporter for the Emerald

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