

Hoax: Call came on the eighth anniversary of the Virginia Tech massacre

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District administrators noted that similar calls have been received this month by two schools in Thurston County, two in Spokane, and several in the Chehalis School District. Other media sources indicated lockdowns Thursday in far-flung school districts from Kamloops, B.C. to Flagstaff, Ariz.

"We do not know yet if these calls are coming from the same source and all cases are under investigation at this time," the local district's statement said. "The safety of all students is our first priority and we appreciate the patience and understanding that parents and community showed today."

Anything but funny

On the eighth anniversary of the Virginia Tech massacre, the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history, Thursday's events felt like anything but a prank to children and parents on the Long Beach Peninsula. Some students were reported to have suffered full-blown panic attacks as law officers with assault rifles rushed defend local schools.

Elementary school students started to be sent home about 2:45 p.m. A reporter at the scene at Long Beach Elementary said at 3:24 p.m. that children were being released to their parents one at a time.

Ilwaco Middle and High School students were released to their parents and school buses starting at about 3:20 p.m., although this process took a while. An IHS student texted from her hiding place at 3:40 p.m. that she and classmates were about to get an armed escort out of the building but were still technically in lockdown.

Incident starts

All Peninsula schools were locked down at 1:45 p.m. Thursday following an alleged "mass shooting" threat. A district employee said earlier in the afternoon a phone call that sounded automated was received by all schools, sending the facilities into safety protocols that require external doors to be locked, and for students and staff to quietly shelter behind internal locked doors.

A Long Beach first grade class that took shelter at the Chinook Observer was escorted back to school by a Long Beach police officer and volunteer firefighter at about 2:40 p.m. They



Long Beach Police officer Casey Meling and school Superintendent Jenny Reisner listen to questions from parents waiting across the street from Long Beach School for the lockdown to be lifted in order to pick up their children.

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were playing at the park across the street from the newspaper when the lockdown began. The small children were visibly upset and were seated on the floor out of sight from the street.

Part of the Ilwaco Middle School marching band reportedly hid beneath the IHS stadium bleachers.

elementary were turned away. Other agencies responding to the potential attack included Washington State Parks and the Washington State Patrol.

Information in scant supply

"Please do not call or come to the schools," elementary school administrators said in a Facebook posting at 2:13 p.m. "The police will let us know when we can release students. Currently all students are in a safe place and are safe."

"It's so hard to just stay away. Our innocent babies are in there!" a parent posted.

No shooting or violence was heard or observed.

A student at IHS texted at 2:10 p.m. to say they are hiding. "We took some selfies before we realized it wasn't a drill. ... We're on our phones whispering." Elsewhere in the building, students without bathroom facilities had to make due with Gatorade bottles or whatever was available.

Some head home by regular time

Long Beach parents who normally pick their children up were staged in the city parking lots between Pacific Avenue and Washington Street and were being permitted to pick their children up under carefully monitored conditions.

Pacific County sheriff's deputies were observed guarding Long Beach Elementary, holding assault rifles, according to an observer a block away. A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife officer guarded the rear of the building. Any vehicles approaching Long Beach El-



A Pacific County sheriff's deputy armed with an assault rifle stands posted outside of Long Beach School Thursday afternoon.

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