



# HATE CRIME THREAT GUIDE

U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Civil Rights Unit



Hate crime threats come in many forms, and as such, each response will be unique. In each response, law enforcement should be notified, and every attempt to preserve evidence should be made. The below general tips can be helpful to follow when confronted with a hate crime threat.

A True Threat is a serious communication of an intent to commit an act of unlawful violence against a particular individual or group of individuals.

A true threat is not protected by the First Amendment and can be a prosecutable offense as a hate crime.

## Physical Threat

A physical threat is an in-person true threat which is deemed to place the recipient or others in imminent danger. A totality of the circumstances standard suggests that there is no single deciding factor in a physical threat assessment. One must consider all the facts and context, and conclude from the whole picture whether there is a possible imminent threat. When confronted with an imminent physical threat of harm, you have three options:

- ⇒ Run.
  - Have an escape route and plan in mind.
  - Leave your belongings behind.
  - Help others escape, if possible.
  - Do not attempt to move the wounded.
- ⇒ Hide.
  - Hide in an area out of the threat's view.
  - Lock door or block entry to your hiding place.
  - Silence your cell phone (including vibrate mode) and remain silent.
- ⇒ Fight.
  - Fight as a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger.
  - Attempt to incapacitate the threat.
  - Act with as much physical aggression as possible.
  - Improvise weapons or throw items at the threat.
  - Commit to your actions... your life depends on it.
- ⇒ Once the imminent threat has subsided, call 911.

## Verbal Threat

A verbal threat is an in-person true threat that is deemed to not place the recipient in immediate danger.

- ⇒ If the perpetrator leaves, note which direction they went.
- ⇒ Immediately notify law enforcement by calling 911.
- ⇒ Write down the threat exactly as it was communicated.
- ⇒ Note the description of the person who made the threat:

- |                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Name (if                  | • Race                            |
| • Gender                    | • Type/Color of                   |
| • Body size (height/weight) | • Hair & eye color                |
| • Distinguishing features   | • Voice (loud, deep, accent, etc) |

## Phoned Threat

A phoned true threat is one received telephonically. The recipient of the threat should attempt to obtain as much information on the caller and the threat as possible, unless the threat is deemed to put the recipient or others in harm.

- ⇒ Remain calm & do not hang up. Attempt to solicit information to determine if the threat is specific, realistic, and poses an immediate danger to the safety of others.
- ⇒ If possible, signal other staff members to listen & immediately notify law enforcement by calling 911.
- ⇒ If the phone has a display, copy the number and/or letters on the window display.
- ⇒ Write down the exact wording of the threat.
- ⇒ Keep the caller on for as long as possible and attempt to gather as much information as possible
- ⇒ Record, if possible.
- ⇒ Be available for interviews with law enforcement upon response.

## Electronic Threat

An electronic threat is a true threat received over the internet, such as through e-mail or social media. It is important to recognize that forensic examination can often reveal valuable information that is initially unseen. It is important that the communication is treated as evidence.

- ⇒ DO NOT delete the electronic threat. Forensic examination may uncover additional details.
- ⇒ Leave the message open on the computer.
- ⇒ Immediately notify law enforcement by calling 911.
- ⇒ Print, photograph, or copy the message and subject line, note the date and time.
- ⇒ If knowledgeable, take efforts to preserve all electronic evidence.

## Written or Visual Threat

A written or visual true threat is one that is received in a written or graphic manner, such as handwritten notes or graffiti.

- ⇒ Handle the document/item as little as possible. DO NOT DISCARD THE ITEM, REGARDLESS OF HOW OFFENSIVE. This item is evidence and may pose additional clues for law enforcement.
- ⇒ Immediately notify law enforcement by calling 911.
- ⇒ Rewrite the threat exactly as is on another sheet of paper and note the following:
  - Date/time/location document was found.
  - Any situations or conditions surrounding the discovery/delivery.
  - Full names of anyone who saw the threat.
- ⇒ Secure the original threat; **DO NOT** alter the item in any way.
- ⇒ If small/removable, place in a bag or envelope. Try not to touch the item directly with your hands.
- ⇒ If large/stationary, secure the location and insure the threat is not damaged or altered.

Once safe, the threat recipient should contact the local FBI office and ask to submit a hate crime complaint to the Civil Rights squad.

Not all complaints to local law enforcement are passed along to the FBI.



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## What to expect if you are the victim of a hate crime:

- ⇒ If the FBI concludes that a federal hate crime may have been committed, one or more FBI Special Agents will conduct an investigation. As part of the investigation, the Special Agents will gather evidence, which may include an interview with you and other victims.
- ⇒ You may also be asked to recap your experience before a federal grand jury.
- ⇒ A thorough investigation will be completed. The investigation may take a long time to finish, and you will not be updated or “briefed” on day-to-day case developments. Every effort will be made to tell you about major events in an investigation, such as an arrest or indictment. The FBI is committed to providing such information to you before it is released to the public, when possible. However, the FBI must always be careful not to reveal sensitive information that could hurt the investigation or increase danger to law enforcement.
- ⇒ In addition to an FBI Special Agent, each case with an identified victim will have an FBI Victim Specialist assigned. A Victim Specialist is a highly trained professional who can assist you with support, information and resources. A Victim Specialist will contact you to explain your rights and services available, and will serve as the point of contact between you and the FBI.

## FBI Field Office Telephone Numbers:

|             |                |               |                |                |                |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Albany      | (518) 465-7551 | Indianapolis  | (317) 595-4000 | Oklahoma City  | (405) 290-7770 |
| Albuquerque | (505) 889-1300 | Jackson       | (601) 948-5000 | Omaha          | (402) 493-8688 |
| Anchorage   | (907) 276-4441 | Jacksonville  | (904) 248-7000 | Philadelphia   | (215) 418-4000 |
| Atlanta     | (404) 679-9000 | Kansas City   | (816) 221-6100 | Phoenix        | (623) 466-1999 |
| Baltimore   | (410) 265-8080 | Knoxville     | (865) 544-0751 | Pittsburgh     | (412) 432-4000 |
| Birmingham  | (205) 326-6166 | Las Vegas     | (702) 385-1281 | Portland       | (503) 224-4181 |
| Boston      | (617) 742-5533 | Little Rock   | (501) 221-9100 | Richmond       | (804) 261-1044 |
| Buffalo     | (716) 856-7800 | Los Angeles   | (310) 477-6565 | Sacramento     | (916) 481-9110 |
| Charlotte   | (704) 672-6100 | Louisville    | (502) 263-6000 | Salt Lake City | (801) 579-1400 |
| Chicago     | (312) 421-6700 | Memphis       | (901) 747-4300 | San Antonio    | (210) 225-6741 |
| Cincinnati  | (513) 421-4310 | Miami         | (305) 944-9101 | San Diego      | (858) 320-1800 |
| Cleveland   | (216) 522-1400 | Milwaukee     | (414) 276-4684 | San Francisco  | (415) 553-7400 |
| Columbia    | (803) 551-4200 | Minneapolis   | (763) 569-8000 | San Juan       | (787) 754-6000 |
| Dallas      | (972) 559-5000 | Mobile        | (251) 438-3674 | Seattle        | (206) 622-0460 |
| Denver      | (303) 629-7171 | New Haven     | (203) 777-6311 | Springfield    | (217) 522-9675 |
| Detroit     | (313) 965-2323 | New Orleans   | (504) 816-3000 | St. Louis      | (314) 231-4324 |
| El Paso     | (915) 832-5000 | New York City | (212) 384-1000 | Tampa          | (813) 253-1000 |
| Honolulu    | (808) 566-4300 | Newark        | (973) 792-3000 | Washington DC  | (202) 278-2000 |
| Houston     | (713) 693-5000 | Norfolk       | (757) 455-0100 |                |                |

Field office telephone numbers as of 09/2017. The most current field office telephone numbers can be found at <https://www.fbi.gov>.