

Hackettstown schools lockdown: Caller alleges he was armed, upset and Swedish



By [Kathryn Brenzel | The Express-Times](#)

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The unidentified man who prompted lockdowns at four [Hackettstown](#) schools today told authorities he was in possession of an assault rifle.

He also told emergency dispatch he was a native of Sweden and angry with his ex-girlfriend. The threatening message, which [the Hackettstown Public School District later announced was "unfounded" when it lifted the lockdowns this afternoon](#), was accompanied by a fragmented description of the suspect, who is still unknown.

The Warren County Communications Center received approximately three calls from the man, and it was during the final call that authorities were able to engage the man for about 90 minutes, according to Warren County Public Safety Director Frank Wheatley.

An Express-Times reporter who was allowed inside the communications center while the episode unfolded overheard dispatchers discuss the following matters with the caller:

Though he refused to divulge his location, the caller indicated he was upset with his ex-girlfriend, who he said left him five months ago. He said he was listening to music on his computer, specifically the rap styling of Wiz Khalifa and Kanye West. At times, he sang along.

He also told authorities his family was living in Sweden and requested at times that the dispatcher speak to him in his native language. The man also claimed that he was born in 1993. He referred to an AK-47, alleged to be in his possession, as his "beauty."

According to Wheatley, the suspect's **first call to the communications center came at 9:45 a.m., when the man indicated that he had an assault weapon and was hiding out in the woods beyond Hackettstown High School.**

The untraceable threat spurred a lockdown at the high school and at nearby **Centenary College, Hatchery Hill Elementary School, St. Mary's Catholic School** and **Hackettstown Middle School**, Warren County Prosecutor Scott Ferguson said during a news conference later in the day. The high school went into a "modified lockdown" just before 2 p.m., meaning that students who could drive were permitted to leave and all others would be dismissed at the regular time.

Authorities said activities at the school would continue as normal, but security may be heightened.

"At this point we don't believe there is any threat to anybody at the high school or any of the other schools," Ferguson said.

Investigations continue as the man has yet to be identified or located, the prosecutor said. **"We made a thorough search of the area and turned up nothing,"** he said. **Hackettstown police, New Jersey State Police**, the Warren County Prosecutor's Office and the county's tactical team are collaborating on the investigation. Ferguson also indicated the FBI was involved.

Asked about the potential consequences facing the threat-maker, Ferguson wouldn't delve into specifics but said that "the nature of the incident" merited serious action.

"Obviously, this is a very serious incident, whether it was a prank or whether it was something else," he said. **"If and when we determine that there's a person to prosecute, I think it'll be taken very seriously."**

Throughout the day, parents crowded Warren Street, some waiting outside for more than four hours for the OK from officials to retrieve their children from the high school.

"We're panicked; we're scared," said Joe Sicari, who was waiting for his daughter. **"I just want my kid back and that's pretty much it."**

Rumors abounded surrounding the suspect, including alleged sightings, but Ferguson said the man wasn't seen at any point today.

Many parents received developing information from their children, who in turn, were using their cellphones to find out what was going on, according Rob DiRienzo, a junior at the high school.

"It was kind of scary, but we pulled through," DiRienzo said. **"We weren't really told anything until the end."**

Upon dismissal, high school student Sean Brenner joined his father, Keith Brenner, who'd been waiting since this morning for his son's return.

"I wasn't freaking out," Sean Brenner said, when asked how he reacted to the lockdown. **"But if you hear a guy's running around with an AK-47, you'd want to get out of there."**