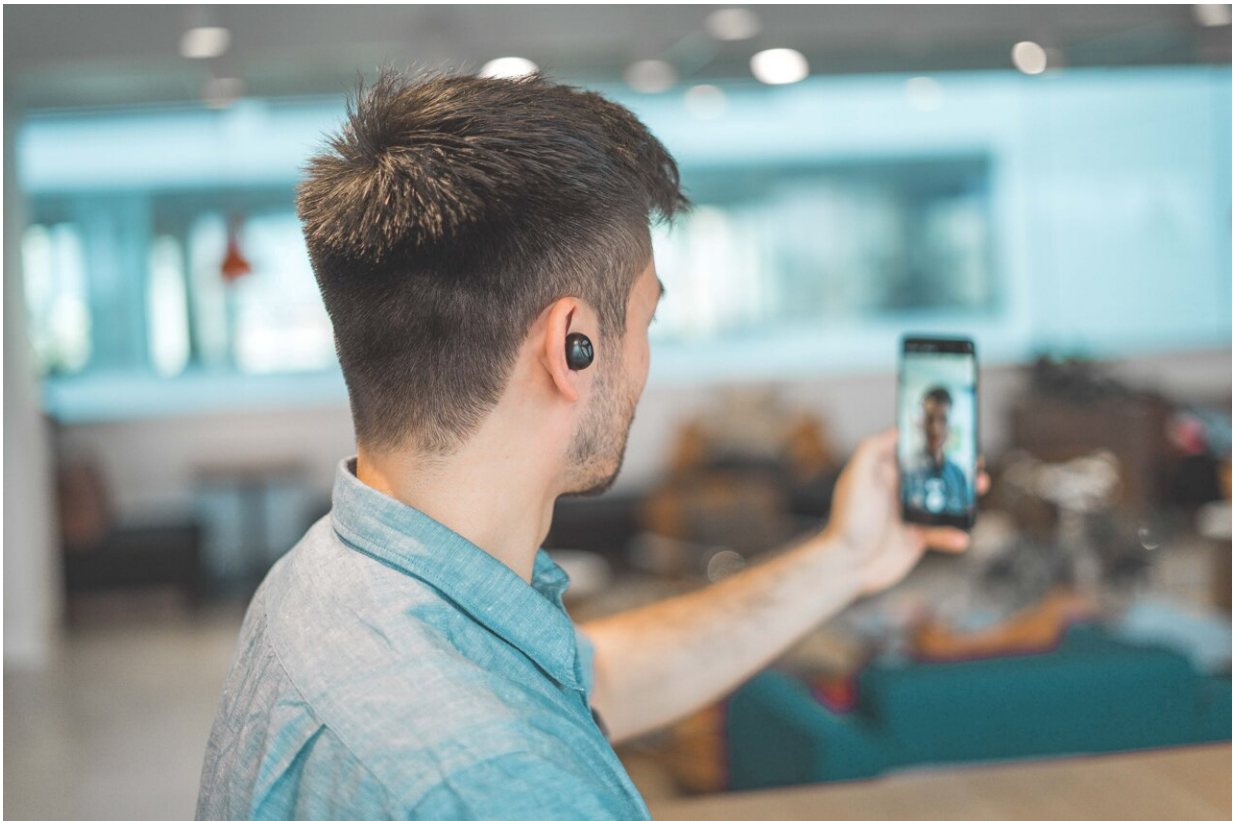


Amid alleged TikTok school shooting threats, here's what we know about app's response

December 20 2021, by Brett Molina



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

TikTok is once again capturing attention for an alleged viral trend involving U.S. schools.

Several [school districts](#) in the U.S. have issued warnings, beefed up security and canceled classes, with some citing threats made on the social media app TikTok.

"We are writing to inform you and not alarm you," [school administrators](#) in Oak Park and River Forest, Illinois, said in a message to parents. "We have been made aware of a nationwide viral TikTok trend about '[school shooting](#)' and bomb threats for every school in the U.S. even elementary' on Friday, December 17."

Some schools in states including California, Minnesota and Texas have closed for the day, while others have increased police presence.

In a statement on Twitter, TikTok said "we handle even rumored threats with utmost seriousness, which is why we're working with [law enforcement](#) to look into warnings about potential violence at schools even though we have not found evidence of such threats originating or spreading via TikTok."

What is TikTok's role in this, and how do they handle threats on their platform? Here's what you should know.

What is TikTok's response to alleged threats?

In a statement to U.S. TODAY, TikTok spokesperson Jamie Favazza said TikTok is continuing to "aggressively search" for any related content on its platform.

"We are deeply concerned that the proliferation of local media reports on an alleged trend that has not been found on the platform could end up inspiring real world harm," she said.

In a tweet published Friday, TikTok said they are "working to remove

alarmist warnings that violate our misinformation policy" after local authorities, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security confirmed there's no credible [threat](#).

"If we did find promotion of violence on our platform, we'd remove and report it to law enforcement," said the company.

How does TikTok moderate content?

The app has a safety team based in the U.S. Any content uploaded to TikTok passes through technology to inspect for possible policy violations then is reviewed by a member of the app's safety team, according to a July post from Eric Han, head of U.S. safety at TikTok.

TikTok has since rolled out new tools to automatically remove any uploaded content that might violate its guidelines.

"Creators will be able to appeal their video's removal directly in our app or report potential violations to us for review, as they can today," Han wrote in July.

TikTok also has policies in place to assist law enforcement in the event of an emergency.

"If as part of an emergency request we receive information that is sufficient in our assessment to establish a good faith belief that there is an emergency involving imminent harm or the risk of death or serious physical injury to a person, we may provide [user data](#) necessary to prevent that harm, as permitted by applicable law," reads an excerpt of TikTok's law enforcement guidelines.

TikTok and recent online challenges

This isn't the first time TikTok has been associated with a viral trend involving schools. In October, students at some schools faced charges over a "slap a teacher" challenge that had reportedly started on TikTok.

The app released a statement in October saying while the challenge did not trend on TikTok, it would remove any related content. Following the statement, an article from fact-checking site Snopes reported there was little evidence the challenge existed on TikTok.

In September, there was also the "devious licks" trend, which involved stealing or vandalizing [school](#) property. TikTok said it would remove any [content](#) related to "devious licks" including hashtags, and redirect any hashtags to their community guidelines.

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