



**CITRUS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
*A Nationally Accredited Law Enforcement Agency*

**SHERIFF**  
**MIKE PRENDERGAST**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **A Message from the Sheriff**

It is the responsibility of the Sheriff to be conservators of the peace in their counties, which includes actively advocating for security on our school campuses. In addition, it's our job to make security decisions, based on professional judgment and that's exactly what we have done and will continue to do, alongside our partners at the Citrus County School District.

We completely understand the fear and panic that grips our country right now in the wake of the Parkland tragedy. Parents and students are apprehensive and vocal about campus safety. As we have said many times, the CCSO, along with officials of the Citrus County School District take all threats at schools very seriously, and we investigate them thoroughly to determine the validity of each threat.

We can confidently say that every bit of information that we have received thus far regarding a threat at any of our district schools has been either unsubstantiated and or appropriate measures have been taken by our agency and the school district on a case-by-case basis.

Unfortunately, in the world we live in now, everything and anything is on social media. School safety is an extremely sensitive issue and sharing false information on social media – by parents and or students – is not helping our investigators, but hindering their efforts. We've come across a few instances where false information has been shared on social media, stirring panic in our community, therefore creating difficulties with tracking down possible threats. Subsequently, we're finding out that these claims are not even in our county.

We continue to say to you, if you "see something, or hear something - say something". If you receive any concerning texts, emails, or social media posts about a threat at a school in our county, we ask that you immediately call 9-1-1 rather than escalating rumors by sharing them on social media. React quickly and call and let us do our jobs and investigate. Prompt reporting makes it much easier to trace the information to its source and determine whether there is, in fact, an issue.



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Parents - please talk with your children about not sharing texts or social media posts that use language such as "I heard," or "apparently," or "don't go to school" – please talk with your children about passing information along to law enforcement if they hear or see firsthand a person threatening to hurt someone.

The Citrus County Sheriff's Office has been working tirelessly to ensure public safety in and around our schools. Our agency is in favor of any and all actions necessary to keep the students of Citrus County safe. If that is expanding the number of school resource officers, conducting more active shooter drills, or facilitating additional enhancements in our schools – then that is exactly what we will do. However, it has to be a collaborative effort and we need your support in protecting our children. We are proud of our partnerships with the school system and are passionately committed to keeping your children safe.

Our ultimate goal is to make sure parents are sending their children to schools that are safe. The same goes for students - they shouldn't have to worry about whether or not an armed lunatic is going to come into their schools and open fire.

While there are those who want to unnecessarily and irresponsibly ignite fear and apprehension among others, we are doing all we can to protect the safety and well-being of all students, teachers, parents and residents. We are a strong community and will not succumb to fear.

My team and I remain proud to serve and we're focused on this mission at hand. We will continue to be engaged with school district leadership and our elected officials on this matter as we work out the next steps in this process.

Yours in Service,  
Mike Prendergast, Sheriff