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West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

News Release

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WEST VIRGINIANS ENCOURAGED TO REPORT UNSAFE ACTIVITIES, THREATS TO SAFE SCHOOLS HELPLINE

CHARLESTON, W. Va. – As the nation observes *America's Safe Schools Week* Oct. 15-21, West Virginians are reminded that they can play an important part in keeping the state's schools safe with a phone call to the West Virginia Safe Schools Helpline, an anonymous, 24-hour, toll-free tipline that allows individuals to report unsafe school activities or threats to students, school personnel and school property.

Individuals with information relating to any unsafe activities that may harm people at a school are encouraged to call 866-SAFEWVA (866-723-3982). Unsafe activities or threats may also be reported via email at: safeschools@wvdmmaps.gov.

"As recent events have painfully reminded us, we cannot take the safety of our children and our schools for granted. The West Virginia Safe Schools Helpline is an important tool in our statewide efforts to prevent unsafe activities in our schools and respond quickly as dangerous situations or threats arise," said Gov. Joe Manchin III.

Callers to the Helpline speak to a live operator, who will take critical information relating to the situation or concern. Callers are asked to be specific in their description of any potential threat of school violence by sharing with the operator the school name; time; specific location of any potential incident; and, the names of any individuals involved in the event and what school they attend.

"A key part of our mission at the West Virginia Department of Education is to provide a healthy and safe learning environment for the students of our state," said West Virginia Superintendent of Schools Steve Paine. "The Helpline enhances the school safety plans already in place in every West Virginia school and I expect the service will prove to be a powerful tool."

Anyone can call the Helpline to report things that can harm students, staff or school property. Some examples are: violence, weapons, threats, thefts or property damage, drugs or alcohol abuse or sexual harassment.

The Safe Schools Helpline was established under Governor Wise in 2001 and an operator is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls are administered by the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. For more information on the America's Safe Schools Week observance, visit www.schoolsafety.us.

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