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Report of armed clown on Merrimack campus was a hoax

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FILE PHOTO

Students on the Merrimack College campus were briefly told to shelter in place on Monday.

By Travis Andersen

GLOBE STAFF OCTOBER 04, 2016

A dormitory at Merrimack College was evacuated Monday night and students across campus were briefly told to remain inside after a false report surfaced on Twitter that an armed clown was in the residence hall, a spokesman said.

Jim Chiavelli, a Merrimack spokesman, said a shelter-in-place notice went out to students at 9:36 p.m. Students who lived in the evacuated dorm were allowed to reenter the building just after 10 p.m.

Campus police at the North Andover college responded to a tweet “about an armed clown in one residence hall,” Chiavelli said.

Police found nothing suspicious after clearing and searching the building, Chiavelli said, and officials believe the incident was a hoax. The tweet came from a user identified as “clown watch,” and Chiavelli said similar reports were apparently “hitting a lot of campuses tonight.”



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Residents in at least 26 states, including Massachusetts, have reported to police unsettling encounters in recent weeks with people dressed as menacing clowns.

In the Massachusetts case, someone called police on the night of Sept. 17 in Greenfield to report that they saw someone dressed as a clown “lurking” at the Franklin County Fairgrounds, according to

police Lieutenant Joe Burge. Officers checked the area, but found nothing.

Matt Rocheleau of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Travis Andersen can be reached at travis.andersen@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@TAGlobe](https://twitter.com/TAGlobe).

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