

Swatting HB745/ SB340

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POSITION: Favorable

I worked in the Anne Arundel County 911 Center for 35+ years. Swatting is a tactic in which someone wanting to initiate a large police or fire department response makes a false call. They often are able to look as though they are calling from the address being reported, but in reality they are not and this is no emergency. It may be just a prank targeting someone or to lure all resources away from an area to target another.

This is clearly criminal behavior in my opinion. More than that, it is dangerous. Dangerous to the field responders heading lights and sirens to what they believe to be a high priority call. Dangerous to citizens in their path as there are inherent risk of accidents as emergency personnel need to respond quickly. And also dangerous to anyone at the address given, since responders believe something bad has occurred. I took a swatting call several years ago for a report of multiple people shot in the Pioneer City community in Severn. It was a large response and there had been no shooting. There have been similar calls, often made for "fun" to see police responding in mass. This behavior is not a prank. It is serious, dangerous and criminal.

It is clear to me that any intentional false call to 911 is criminal. When the nature of the call is elevated to an event requiring a mass response of police officers, SOD (Special Operations Division), fire department, command staff and potentially mutual aid, that call should be identified and prosecuted for a felony act. I respectfully urge you approve SB340/HB745