

Personal Safety & Security

What is a Threat?



Personal Safety & Security
**YOUR SAFETY
OUR PRIORITY**

The [Federal Protective Service](#) is committed to ensuring the safety and security of those who visit and work in Federal facilities. As co-chair of the [Government Services and Facilities Sector](#), FPS promotes security and resilience by sharing information and resources with state, local, tribal, and territorial government personnel, as well as for the essential functions they perform.

What is a threat?

A “threat” is a statement or action indicating an intention to harm or cause damage. Threats can be written or verbal and delivered through any number of mediums – the mail, internet, social media, telephone, or in-person. Threats are often disruptive because they cause fear, stress, and anxiety. Threats can have long-lasting psychological effects on the receiver and bystanders, impacting mental health and productivity.

Protected speech?

While the First Amendment protects most forms of expression, true threats are not protected forms of speech. The Supreme Court defines true threats as “serious expressions conveying that a speaker means to commit an act of unlawful violence” against an individual or group of individuals.⁴ Communications meeting the Supreme Court’s definition of a true threat are criminal and may be prosecuted under several federal criminal statutes.²

Investigating threats

FPS investigates threats made against federal employees and officials. Federal law authorizes FPS to investigate criminal offenses committed against federal property or against persons on the property. FPS also investigates crime occurring off federal property to the extent necessary to protect federal property and persons on federal property. In limited circumstances, FPS investigates crimes occurring off federal property against teleworking/remote work federal employees who typically work on-site at an FPS-protected facility.

FPS also coordinates with and makes appropriate referrals to other federal, state, and local law enforcement partners with jurisdiction to investigate.

Have you been threatened? Threats are crimes that should be reported!

- If you need immediate assistance, dial 911.
- If you are a federal employee who works for an agency located at an FPS-protected facility, call the FPS MegaCenter hotline at 1-877-4-FPS-411.
- If you are not a federal employee or are unsure if your agency is located at an FPS-protected facility, contact local law enforcement.
- Resources for victims of crime can be found online at: <https://www.dhs.gov/victims-crime>

¹ *Counterman v. Colorado*, 600 U.S. 66, 74 (2023)

² See e.g. 18 U.S.C. § 875.

**CONTACT THE FPS MEGACENTER
TO REPORT ANY SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY:**

1-877-4FPS-411 (1-877-437-7411)
OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITIES
***DIAL 911 FOR EMERGENCIES

Resources for victims of crime: dhs.gov/victims-crime



Connect on social media @FPSDHS
Learn more at DHS.gov/FPS

Scan QR code to visit DHS.gov/Publication/YourSafetyOurPriority

