

## Threats Plague Wapello

**By Connie Street of the Muscatine Journal**  
**April 24, 2008**

WAPELLO, Iowa — Students at the Wapello Junior and Senior High school were under lockdown this morning after a bomb threat was found in a restroom late Tuesday. Some students said they were under lockdown on Wednesday, but school officials described Wednesday as a “controlled environment.”

“We are taking this very seriously,” said school Superintendent John Weidner. He said he sent automated emergency messages Wednesday evening. The phone calls were sent through the school messenger system to all parents and staff. This is the second time in as many weeks that the school has had to enact security measures following a perceived threat.

On April 15, a threat was found in a restroom mentioning a gun. Similar action was taken by the school that week and an arrest was made later. When students arrived today, the only entrance that was not locked was on the north side of the high school building. Police were present and officials used a metal detector and checked all coats and bags upon entry. Students were allowed into the building in single file.

Restrooms were locked and only one student at a time was allowed to use them. Classrooms were also locked during classes.

“This is a major inconvenience for everyone, but safety is safety,” Weidner said Wednesday afternoon. The superintendent speculated that he thinks the reason behind the threat is the thrill of doing something and not getting caught.

Weidner said he believes most of the students are annoyed.

Senior Paul Hinkle says he believes it “is completely ridiculous for students to have these kinds of thoughts. I think it is really sad.” I am disappointed that Wapello has to deal with this,” Hinkle said. “I trust that when I go to school in the morning I will walk out safely later in the day. I believe the school is doing all it can and I feel safe there.”

Senior Annie Arnold looks at the situation differently. She said she and her friends are also surprised at this happening at Wapello but are “somewhat scared.”

“You tend to cringe when you see someone carrying a bag,” she said.

Arnold said the students are wondering why anyone would threaten the school and its students. “Is it a joke,” she asked, “or could it be a reaction to someone being bullied? — I hope not.”

Arnold said there is some bullying at the school. She said the senior class “is really nice to everyone,” but some of the younger students tend to bully others. Weidner said an assembly was planned for this morning to apprise the students of the situation.

“They don’t realize the severity of this or the legal ramifications,” he said.

Weidner speculated that the incident is a copy-cat situation, possibly from other school threats around the country or a situation that occurred in Wapello a month ago, but said “it can’t be taken lightly.”