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Wednesday, September 02, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

Tennessee Homeland Security Warns Schools About Disturbing "Cat in the Hat" Social Media Trend

Threat Assessment Center Tracking New "Cat in the Hat" Trend



The Tennessee Office of Homeland Security's Threat Assessment Center is monitoring a viral online trend involving AI-generated "Cat in the Hat" videos and images that have recently targeted students and schools across the country. Officials say the content, which circulates primarily on TikTok and Instagram, uses unsettling edits and horror-style imagery drawn from the 2003 film *The Cat in the Hat*.

Homeland Security is urging anyone who encounters these posts to report them to **local law enforcement** or through the **SafeTN app** or the state's suspicious activity [website](#).

The trend began in late June when a TikTok creator posted a meme using a scene from the movie paired with a dark caption and eerie audio. The video quickly gained millions of views and inspired others to reinterpret scenes from the film with disturbing themes. Since then, creators have escalated the trend by adding **analog-horror captions**, **AI-generated "found footage" edits**, and scenes designed to resemble **horror-movie monsters**.

Officials say the trend's rapid spread and increasingly graphic reinterpretations have prompted heightened monitoring to ensure student safety. **Source: TN Dept of Homeland Security**

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Wednesday, September 02, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2 Athens, Tennessee

Driver Injured After Rollover Crash on County Road 316



A 29-year-old man sustained minor injuries Monday morning after his Nissan Rogue left the roadway and rolled over in the 1000 block of County Road 316 in Sweetwater around 8 a.m. He was transported by ambulance to a local hospital.

Niota Rural Fire Department, AMR, and the Tennessee Highway Patrol responded to the crash. Trooper Jaylon Skipper is leading the investigation.

Photo credit: Chad Gates, Niota FD

Community News You Can Use

- The McMinn Area Resource Van will go out Thursday, Sept. 3. Meet at the McMinn Sheriff's Office lobby at 9:30 a.m.; departure is at 9:45 with return by noon. Participants may bring agency materials and submit client names/addresses for visits. RSVP to Dep. Tony Allman at mcminnco430@gmail.com.
- Athens Community Theatre will hold auditions for *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* on Sunday, Oct. 18 at 2 p.m. and Monday, Oct. 19 at 6 p.m. at The Arts Center. Director Christen Webb seeks 12 performers ages 10–18. Auditionees will read, move, and sing selections taught on site. Those interested in helping behind the scenes are also encouraged to attend. Bring schedule conflicts for Oct. 20, 2026–Jan. 31, 2027.
- Big Time Small Town returns to AACA with American Patchwork Quartet performing Friday, Sept. 25 at 7 p.m. in the Sue E. Trotter Black Box Theater at The Arts Center.



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McMinn County Arrest Reports

August 31, 2026

Mark Shepherd, 57, of Lehigh Acres, Florida, charged with aggravated assault, cruelty to animals, and leaving the scene of an accident. Bond \$50,000.

Joshua Stabenow, 47, of Athens, charged with public intoxication, aggravated assault, and vandalism. Bond \$25,000.

Devin Patterson, 31, of Riceville, charged with DUI, and child endangerment. Bond \$3,000.

Damian Moore, 54, of Rossville, Georgia, charged with reckless driving, and open container law. Bond \$2,000.

Christopher Graham, 38, of Knoxville, charged with driving on a revoked license, drug paraphernalia, driving an unregistered vehicle, and theft of property motor vehicles. Bond \$10,000.

Samuel Salisbury, 38, of Etowah, charged with state violation of probation for identity theft, evading arrest, and resisting stop. Bond \$5,000.

Ralph Guilford, 47, of Sweetwater, charged with aggravated assault.

Sean Berryhill, 26, of Athens, charged with domestic assault.

Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.
Information gathered using public sources.

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Wednesday, September 02, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 5 Athens, Tennessee

Etowah Rural Fire Awarded Grant



Etowah Rural Fire Department was awarded a \$50,080 grant from the State of Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office. The grant money was used to purchase Protective Fire-fighting Gear and Air Packs.

Photo by Chad Gates, Niota Rural Fire Department

Obituaries

Mary Ruth Lovelace, 92, of Etowah, TN passed away Monday, August 31. Family will receive friends from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., on Wednesday, September 2 in the chapel of Bordwine Funeral Home. A private graveside service will be held. [Bordwine Funeral Home](#) is in charge of arrangements.

We encourage you to e-mail community events, church news, school sports results or other items of interest for possible use in the Morning Fax. If you take a newsworthy photograph, send it to:

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