

Sen. Cowles: Legislation designed to deter 'swatting' becomes law

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after 2019 Assembly Bill 454 was signed into law. This bipartisan bill, authored by Senators Cowles and Van Wanggaard (R-Racine), and Representatives Tyler Vorpapel (R-Plymouth) and Cindi Duchow (R-Town of Delafield), defines the act of 'swatting' and provides a penalty in an effort to deter potential violators from engaging in swatting:

"I'm very pleased to see Wisconsin join other states like California, New Jersey, and Kansas in addressing the act of swatting. This crime not only diverts police resources towards non-emergencies, it endangers the safety of both the innocent victims and the first responders. By increasing the penalties for those who decide to make swatting calls, we can help reduce the frequency of these dangerous pranks and ensure that the legal penalties align with the seriousness of the crime. I would like to thank the co-authors and sponsors for helping advance this legislation, and Governor Evers for signing this bill into law."

As defined in this new law, 'swatting' occurs when an individual reports an emergency to law enforcement, knowing no emergency exists, in an attempt to elicit a response from a SWAT team. An individual found guilty of this knowingly false and severe prank will be guilty of a Class I felony. This new law also states an individual is guilty of a Class H felony if the violation resulted in bodily harm, and a Class E felony if the violation resulted in great bodily harm.