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Creepy clown phenomenon stretches from Cape Breton to southern U.S.

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The creepy clown phenomenon sweeping through the U.S. and parts of Canada over the last couple of months is neither new nor unique to this part of the world, but it's taken on an unusual intensity this year.

The social media-fueled frenzy has led to reported clown sightings from Cape Breton to the U.S. South, over-reactions, false clown-attack claims, warnings from police to calm down and even terror-related charges.

"There is something to the clown craze this year that does seem especially potent," CBC pop culture columnist Jesse Wentz told CBC Toronto's radio show *Metro Morning*. "You can't help but think it represents something larger about our culture."

Wentz said it may have something to do with fear as a political force during this U.S. election campaign.

Ian Brodie, a professor of folklore at Cape Breton University, said clown fear in general is another example of childhood pleasures made sinister, like stories of razor blades in apples or crystal meth that looks like candy.

"Whether or not that ever took place, the story seemed to make sense because we had shifted towards sensing that the world was a dangerous place," Brodie said.

There have been published reports of clown-related incidents or hysteria in at least 18 states, as well as Quebec and Nova Scotia.

- [Clowns at Montreal festival defend their craft](#)

Here's a look at just some of the clown-related reports in North America so far this year:

 A person wearing a clown mask frightened children in a Gatineau, Que., park. (Facebook)

## Quebec

In one of the earliest incidents of creepy clowns this year, teenagers who were photographed in August wearing clown masks and wielding a chain allegedly chased kids home from a park in Gatineau, Que.

Gatineau police [declined to charge the teens](#) as no crime was committed.

## Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia RCMP say a 24-year-old man wearing a clown mask and a T-shirt with a clown image was arrested on Tuesday after he allegedly tried to grab a young boy in Clarks Harbour.

He's facing a charge of breaching an undertaking.

At Halifax West High School, officials said somebody posted a picture on Instagram of a clown outside the school near its driveway. No one actually reported seeing the clown in person, the principal said in a statement reassuring people that there was no safety concern.

Meanwhile, Cape Breton Regional Police [told the Chronicle Herald](#) they received calls in late September about clowns standing in the road, or jumping into the road.

Police warned that jumping in front of a vehicle could result in a \$410 fine.

 Gags the Green Bay Clown was a marketing campaign. (Facebook)

## Wisconsin

A man seen walking around the streets of Green Bay, Wis., wearing a filthy clown suit and carrying four black balloons in early August was taking part in a publicity stunt for a short film. News about "Gags the Green Bay Clown" was reported around the world.



This screen capture from Fox News in the Carolinas warns of sinister clowns. (Screen capture from myfox8.com)

## South Carolina

Residents in northeastern South Carolina told authorities they have spotted people dressed as menacing or unusual clowns on at least eight occasions, Reuters reported in August. However, investigators were unable to confirm any of those sightings due to discrepancies in witness descriptions.

In the town of Greenville, clowns were reportedly seen on the side of a road, outside a laundromat and in a residential backyard. Clowns were also alleged to be luring children into the woods with cash. This was also not substantiated by local authorities.

## Virginia

Authorities say a 13-year-old girl in Virginia has been charged with crimes related to recent reports of scary clowns.

Hampton, Va., police said in a news release Monday that the girl asked a person posing as a clown on social media to kill one of her teachers.

[The Daily Press](#) reported the incident came only a few days after social media threats involving clowns

caused police to increase security at schools in Newport News and Hampton.

The girl has been charged with one count of threatening to kill by electronic message.

## Connecticut

There won't be any red noses or rainbow wigs at schools in New Haven, Conn., this Halloween.

The New Haven Public School district has banned clown costumes and any "symbols of terror," amid a police investigation into a posting on Instagram.

The account uploaded four photos showing menacing-looking clowns with captions telling several area schools to "watch out" and "wait and see" whether the alleged threats are fake.

## Georgia

An 11-year-old Georgia girl was arrested at school with a knife she was reportedly carrying to fend off clown attacks.

- [Fearing clown attacks, little girl takes knife to school](#)

## Texas

A 14-year-old boy in Houston was charged with making a terroristic threat after he allegedly used the image of a clown to threaten a school.

## Ohio

Police said an 18-year-old Ohio woman lied about being attacked by a knife-wielding clown as an excuse for being late for work.

Police in the Cincinnati suburb of Reading say investigators found inconsistencies in the 18-year-old's story and charged her with making a false alarm, a misdemeanor.

Classes were cancelled for the day in Reading after a report that a clown had threatened schools and grabbed a woman by the throat.

And Friday officials at a high school in Miami Township, north of Cincinnati, said a student was arrested and removed from campus for making a threat about clowns on social media.



Italian trickster Matteo Moroni, who is behind the hit viral YouTube channel DM Pranks, is among the people who have used creepy clowns in pranks. The NYPD tells people it sees no real threat in the clown phenomenon. (YouTube)

## New York

Don't worry about the creepy clowns, says the New York Police Department.

Deputy Police Commissioner John Miller told reporters the NYPD is tracking clown reports but they don't "see any real threat here."

"Our main message is don't believe the hype and don't be afraid of the clowns."

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