



## City of Bloomington Police Department

### NEWS RELEASE

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **Bloomington Police Search Storm Sewer for Suspect**

On September 20, 2022 at approximately 09:30 a.m., Bloomington Police Department (BPD) officers responded to Seminary Park for a report of a man swinging a steel rod at several individuals. While officers were en route to the park, it was reported that the suspect had gone to a vehicle in the nearby Kroger parking lot and retrieved a hatchet. The suspect then reportedly walked towards the same individuals in the park and threw the hatchet at them. Officers arrived shortly thereafter and witnesses said that the man had left the area on foot and was last seen headed southbound towards First Street.

Officers began checking the area and located clothing hanging from a railing along First Street that appeared to be clothing that matched that of the suspect's. The clothing was on a railing near a very large storm drain exit that leads north towards the downtown area between College Avenue and Walnut Street. Officers attempted to make verbal contact with the suspect and yelled into the storm drain for him to exit. The man yelled back at the officers and advised them not to enter the storm drain and that he was armed with rifle. The suspect also threatened to shoot the officers if they entered the storm drain. At that point, officers took a position of cover and waited for additional officers to arrive.

Due to the violent acts of the suspect, along with the threat that he was armed with a rifle, a decision was made to have the BPD Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) respond to search for the suspect. BPD also requested that employees from the City of Bloomington Utilities respond to the scene with diagrams of the underground storm drain

system that is connected to box culvert where the man went underground. Further, a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team from the Indiana State Police was requested to respond due to the large area that needed to be searched. Officers used equipment designed to inspect the storm sewer in an effort to locate the suspect, but failed to do so in the section of sewer that runs northbound under Walnut Street and then west towards College Avenue near Smith Avenue. However, as officers removed manhole covers to attempt to make contact with the suspect, an unfired rifle cartridge was discovered in the sewer below Smith Avenue that appeared to have just recently been dropped. Members of the Critical Incident Response Team did utilize noise-flash diversionary devices (NFDDs) inside the storm sewer, which resulted in several loud bangs that could be heard by nearby residences and businesses.

While the search was underway, investigators were able to identify the suspect as Eli Swartzentruber (37, transient). It was learned that Swartzentruber had an outstanding arrest warrant out of Daviess County for a felony charge of Battery Against a Public Safety Official. Further, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office was actively attempting to locate him, as they had developed probable cause for his arrest for several felony charges as a result of an incident that he was alleged to have been involved in earlier in the morning of September 20<sup>th</sup>.

Indiana State Police South SWAT members were able to deploy a City of Bloomington Utilities camera into the connecting storm sewer from the area of N Indiana Avenue and E 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Once the camera was approximately 500 feet into the storm sewer, officers observed a man that matched the description of the suspect. It is believed that this area would be under Kirkwood Avenue. The man initially stated that he would to exit the storm sewer on the north end, but then attempted to flee back to the southwest further into the storm sewer after destroying the camera. At that point, Senior Trooper Richard Klun deployed his K9 partner Loki, which successfully apprehended the man. Troopers with ISP South SWAT were then able to take the man into custody and positively identified him as Eli Swartzentruber. Swartzentruber was escorted out of the storm sewer and was placed into the back of an ambulance to be transported to IU Health Bloomington Hospital for treatment. It was determined that he had an empty handgun holster on his person at the time of his arrest.

Investigators searched the storm sewers but did not locate a rifle or a handgun. However, several unfired .30-06 rifle cartridges were located. Further, a hand scythe and a machete were also found. Officers will continue to search the storm sewers in the coming days in an effort to locate any firearms.

Once released from the hospital, Eli Swartzentruber (DOB 10/15/1984) was transported to the Monroe County Jail and remanded for the following charges as a result of this event:

- Attempted Battery with a Deadly Weapon, level 5 felony
- Intimidation, level 6 felony

The investigation is still active and additional criminal charges may be forthcoming. Other involved agencies may also have additional criminal charges as a result of their involvement.

The Bloomington Police Department is extremely appreciative of the assistance provided by the Indiana State Police, the Indiana University Police Department, and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

No further information is available to be released at this time.

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*Under Indiana law, criminal charges are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.*

A booking photo of Swartzentruber was not available at the time of this release.