

# cbs15.com

A website that falsely purports to be associated with a CBS-affiliated television station and that publishes false stories, including stories about pedophiles, that spread on social media and were picked up by other outlets.

## Ownership and Financing

It is unclear who owns the CBS 15 website, although it appears to be part of a larger collection of fake news sites, including NBC9News.com, ABC14News.com, TVTNews.com, and CGCNews.com. All of the sites use the same design, contact form, and privacy policy. Many of the same articles appear on multiple sites, sometimes displaying different publishing dates.

NewsGuard sent a message through the CBS15.com contact form inquiring about the site's ownership, but did not receive a response.

CBS15.com is not listed as a CBS affiliate by the Federal Communications Commission or on a list of local CBS stations on CBSNews.com. There are three licensed CBS affiliate stations in the U.S. that are broadcast on channel 15. Mike Nelson, a senior vice president for CBS Television Stations, told NewsGuard that CBS15.com is "being reviewed."

The site appears to earn revenue through advertising.

## Content

CBS15.com resembles a legitimate site and publishes articles in five sections -- national, world, politics, business, and entertainment. Each section contains true articles that apparently were written for CBS15.com or for a companion fake site, with information pulled from credible sources. The site also links to reputable media outlets such as Reuters, USA Today, NBC, and Time. Although the website presents itself as a local television news station, NewsGuard did not find any video segments in an October 2018 review.

The motivation behind CBS 15 is unclear. Stories do not appear to be published in connection with a political agenda, and articles -- both the false ones and the real ones -- appear to be fairly random, although a number of the fake articles report about purported crimes involving pedophiles.

## Credibility

CBS15.com has published multiple false articles in late September 2018, all of which involved violent action purportedly taken against pedophiles.

One fake story claimed a "vigilante" had murdered three pedophiles in one week, citing anonymous law enforcement officials. The site ran at least two versions of the story, changing the location but keeping the other details the same. The same basic story, taking place in Macomb County, Michigan, also appeared on NBC9News.com, another fake news site that appears to be part of the same network as CBS15.com.

WDIV-TV, the NBC affiliate in Detroit, reported the day after the vigilante story appeared online and spread on social media that the Macomb County Sheriff's Office said the story was false. "The Macomb County Sheriff's Office has not had any recent murders involving any registered sex offenders and our residents have no reason to be fearful of a killer on the loose. Completely FAKE NEWS," the sheriff's office said in a Facebook post.

Another fake story claimed a young boy fatally shot a "home intruder with a record of sex offences [sic] against children." The site ran at least two versions of the story, changing the location and the boy's age, but keeping the other details the same. The stories quoted an unnamed boy, claiming he could not be identified "for legal reasons," and an anonymous 911 operator. The same story, purportedly taking place in West Jordan, Utah, also appeared on NBC9News.com.

KUTV, the CBS affiliate in Salt Lake City, reported that the West Jordan Police Department said there was "no record of this event."










Yet another fake story claimed a mother in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, fatally shot a registered sex offender who was attempting to rape her 12-year-old daughter, "blowing off most of his head." It cited information it said was provided by the unnamed mother and quoted anonymous sources, identified as a member of a "victims rights" group and an "investigator."

The same story, this time set in Morgantown, West Virginia, ran on ABC14News.com, another fake news website that appears to be part of the same network as CBS15.com. Ed Preston, chief of police for the Morgantown Police Department, told The Associated Press that the story was false and that ABC 14 News "does not exist in that area." The fake story was picked up by several sites including Bossip.com, IndependentSentinel.com, and SOTT.net.

Additional articles on the site appear suspicious due to a lack of credible sourcing, an



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.**

-  **Does not repeatedly publish false content**
-  **Gathers and presents information responsibly**
-  **Regularly corrects or clarifies errors**
-  **Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly**
-  **Avoids deceptive headlines**
-  **Website discloses ownership and financing**
-  **Clearly labels advertising**
-  **Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest**
-  **The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information**

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*  
*More information.*

absence of relevant information, and the use of deceptive headlines.

For example, an article listed as published in December 2017 titled “The Private Education Sector Is About To Be Disrupted By A New Startup” referenced a “new firm dedicated to providing remote education” that is “undergoing a seed round raising capital to fund further investment.” No other information about the firm or its funding was mentioned in the rest of the article, which focused instead on the differences between public and private schools.

Articles on CBS15.com often reference dated information and summarize stories originally published months before. For example, a true article about a wrongly imprisoned Florida man was published in September 2018, but the original story appeared in other media in June 2018. An article published on CBS15.com in September 2018 titled “New Study Finds Teen Suicide Rate Has Doubled In US From 2008 to 2015” referred to a May 2018 study published on the actual CBS News website the same month.

New content is published infrequently. Multiple stories featured prominently in October 2018 appeared to have been first published in April 2018.

NewsGuard could not find examples of corrections or updates on the site. A message sent through the CBS15.com contact form inquiring about the site’s editorial practices did not elicit a response.

## Transparency

Articles written for CBS15.com display an author’s name, although no biographical or contact information is available. When NewsGuard reviewed CBS15.com in October 2018, articles were attributed to four authors, whose names on each story linked to a general contact form housed on CBS15.com. The same four authors appear on NBC9News.com. NewsGuard could not determine if the names were real.

Information about the site’s ownership is not disclosed. There is also no information about editorial leadership. The only contact information available to users is the general contact form.

Basic information that typically appears on local TV news websites is missing on CBS15.com, including the station’s call letters and links to Federal Communications Commission filings. Additionally, the site does not appear to report on a specific area or community, as would be expected of a local television site.

NewsGuard sent a message through the CBS15.com contact form inquiring about the site’s lack of disclosure of its ownership, leadership, and content creators but did not receive a response.

Advertisements are clearly labeled.

## History

The CBS15.com domain name was most recently registered on September 27, 2018. It had been registered, and subsequently deleted, twice, most recently in August 2018.

Written by: [Melissa Goldin](#)

Edited by: [Joe Danielewicz](#), [Eric Effron](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

## Sources

### Ownership and Financing

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<http://cbs15.com/privacy/>  
[https://publicfiles.fcc.gov/find/cbs/page-offset-0/order-best-match/filter-\[\]/](https://publicfiles.fcc.gov/find/cbs/page-offset-0/order-best-match/filter-[]/)  
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<https://hoax-alert.leadstories.com/3469814-fake-news-macomb-county-fears-vigilante-serial-killer-after-third-pedophile-murdered-in-1-week.html>

### Content

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### Credibility

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**Transparency**

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**History**

<https://domainbigdata.com/cbs15.com>