A website that falsely purports to be associated with an NBC-affiliated television station and that publishes false stories, including a made-up article about a “vigilante” serial killer in Michigan that spread on social media.

**Ownership and Financing**

It is unclear who owns NBC 9 News, although it appears to be part of a larger network of fake sites, including CBS15.com, ABC14News.com, TVTNews.com, and CGCNews.com. All these sites use the same design, contact form, and privacy policy. NewsGuard sent two messages through the NBC9News.com contact form inquiring about the site’s ownership, but did not receive a response.

NBC9News.com is not affiliated with NBC. Josh Kleinbaum, vice president of digital news for NBC Owned Television Stations, confirmed to NewsGuard. There are seven NBC affiliates in the U.S. that are carried on Channel 9 in their markets.

The site appears to earn revenue through advertising.

**Content**

NBC9News.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 NBC9News.com, with information pulled from credible sources. The site also links to reputable media outlets such as NBC itself, Reuters, USA Today, and Time.

Although the website presents itself as a television news affiliate station, NewsGuard did not find any video segments in its October 2018 review.

The motivation behind NBC 9 News is unclear. Stories do not appear to be published in connection with a political agenda, and articles — both the false ones and real ones — appear to be fairly random, although a number of the fake articles involve pedophilia.

**Credibility**

NBC9News.com published multiple false articles in late September 2018, all of which involved violent action against pedophiles.

One claimed a “vigilante” in Macomb County, Michigan, had murdered three pedophiles in one week, citing anonymous law enforcement officials. WDIV-TV, the NBC affiliate in Detroit, reported the day after the story appeared that the Macomb County Sheriff’s Office confirmed on its Facebook page that the report was false, after the story spread on social media. “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 article claimed a seven-year-old boy in West Jordan, Utah, fatally shot a “home intruder with a record of sex offences [sic] against children.” It only quoted an unnamed boy, claiming he could not be identified “for legal reasons,” along with an anonymous 911 operator. 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 story claimed a 52-year-old man in Mishawaka, Indiana, was arrested after imprisoning a 32-year-old “pedophile who had broken into the property and tried to molest his grandson” and torturing him with a “device similar to a rack used in medieval times.” The article only quoted the unnamed man and cited anonymous “authorities.” WNDU-TV, the NBC affiliate in South Bend, Indiana, reported that the Mishawaka Police Department confirmed that the report is false. “This story is not true,” the post read. “If it were, it would have been reported throughout local media and a comment would have been made from the police department.”

Additional articles on the site appear suspicious due to a lack of credible sourcing, an absence of relevant information, and the use of deceptive headlines.

For example, a September 2018 article 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 NBC9News.com often reference outdated 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 NBC9News.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 reported on by CBS News 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. Two messages sent through the NBCNews.com contact form inquiring about the site's editorial practices did not elicit a response.

Transparency

Articles written for NBCNews.com name the author, although no biographical or contact information is available. When NewsGuard reviewed NBCNews.com in October 2018, articles were attributed to four authors whose names on each story linked to a general contact form. NewsGuard could not immediately 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 the sites of local television stations is missing on NBCNews.com, including the station's call letters and links to Federal Communications Commission documents. 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 two messages through the NBCNews.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 NBCNews.com domain name was most recently registered on September 29, 2018. It has been registered, and subsequently deleted, three times, most recently in February 2018.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: Click Here

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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