

# Complication Cards

## Activity 3: AI-Assisted Incident Response

### How to Use These Cards

During Phase 3 (Response Execution), inject complications every 5 minutes to simulate the dynamic nature of real incidents. Start with milder complications and escalate as appropriate.

#### Tips:

- Read the complication aloud to the team
  - Give them 30 seconds to react before moving on
  - Don't inject complications if a team is already struggling
  - The goal is adaptation practice, not team breakdown
- 

### Grades 9-12: Enterprise Complications

#### Communication Pressure

##### COMPLICATION: Media Attention

#### Situation:

A local news outlet just tweeted: "Sources confirm major cyber incident at TechCorp. Developing story."

Your phone is ringing—it's the communications VP asking for talking points in 5 minutes.

#### Questions for the team:

- What can you say publicly right now?
  - What must you NOT say?
  - Who approves external communications?
- 

##### COMPLICATION: Executive Demand

#### Situation:

The CEO just sent a message: "I have a board call in 20 minutes. I need a one-paragraph summary of what's happening and whether we're going to make Friday's deadline."

#### Questions for the team:

- What's the honest answer about the deadline?
  - How do you balance transparency with uncertainty?
  - What must the CEO understand before the board call?
- 

### Scope Expansion

##### COMPLICATION: New Systems Compromised

#### Situation:

SentinelAI just flagged additional alerts:

- 12 workstations in the FINANCE network segment
- Same indicators as manufacturing floor
- Finance systems contain payroll and vendor data

#### Questions for the team:

- Does this change your containment strategy?
  - Do you need to notify additional stakeholders?
  - What's the new scope of potential data exposure?
- 

### COMPLICATION: OT System Alert

#### Situation:

The HVAC-CONTROLLER-01 (OT/IT bridge system) just showed unusual network traffic. Manufacturing floor temperature is critical for equipment.

If you isolate this system: Risk of equipment damage from temperature fluctuation If you don't isolate: Risk of OT network compromise

#### Questions for the team:

- How do you balance physical equipment risk vs. cyber risk?
  - Who needs to be involved in this decision?
  - Is there a middle-ground option?
- 

### Human Factors

#### COMPLICATION: Insider Concern

#### Situation:

HR just informed you that the employee who clicked the phishing email (jsmith) was recently passed over for a promotion and has been vocal about dissatisfaction.

#### Questions for the team:

- Does this change your investigation approach?
  - How do you handle this sensitively while maintaining security?
  - What's the difference between accident and malice?
- 

### COMPLICATION: Stakeholder Conflict

#### Situation:

The Manufacturing VP just called: "I don't care about your security concerns—we have a \$2M order shipping Friday and you want to shut down my floor? I'll take this to the CEO."

#### Questions for the team:

- How do you maintain security posture while addressing business needs?
  - What options might satisfy both security and operations?
  - When do you escalate vs. compromise?
- 

## Grades 6-8: School Complications

### Communication Pressure

#### NEW DEVELOPMENT: Parent Group

#### Situation:

A parent posted on Facebook: “Anyone else hearing about a computer problem at Riverside? What aren’t they telling us??”  
The post already has 47 comments and the principal wants a response NOW.

**Questions for the team:**

- What can you share publicly?
  - Who should respond—and how?
  - How do you prevent rumors while investigation continues?
- 

## **NEW DEVELOPMENT: Media Inquiry**

**Situation:**

A local TV station just called the front office asking for a statement about “the cyber attack at Riverside Middle School.”  
The principal needs talking points in 2 minutes.

**Questions for the team:**

- Should you confirm or deny an “attack”?
  - What’s the difference between “incident” and “attack”?
  - What do you say when you don’t know everything yet?
- 

## **Scope Changes**

### **NEW DEVELOPMENT: Spread to Other Classrooms**

**Situation:**

Two more classrooms just reported the same symptoms—pop-ups on their computers.  
The problem is spreading.

**Questions for the team:**

- Does this change your response priority?
  - Should you shut down the whole school network?
  - How do you balance learning disruption vs. containment?
- 

## **NEW DEVELOPMENT: Student Data Concern**

**Situation:**

A teacher just realized that the affected file server also contains student contact information and emergency contacts.  
This might be a data breach, not just malware.

**Questions for the team:**

- Who needs to be notified if student data was accessed?
  - Are there legal requirements you need to consider?
  - How does this change stakeholder communication?
- 

## **Human Factors**

### **NEW DEVELOPMENT: The Student Who Clicked**

**Situation:**

You’ve identified the student who clicked the phishing email. They’re crying in the hallway, saying “I ruined everything.”

**Questions for the team:**

- Is this a discipline issue or a learning opportunity?
  - How do you balance investigation with compassion?
  - What message do you want to send to all students?
- 

## NEW DEVELOPMENT: Teacher Resistance

### Situation:

A teacher refuses to stop using computers: “I have a major lesson today and I won’t let some pop-ups ruin my teaching. The kids need their projects.”

### Questions for the team:

- Can you force compliance? Should you?
  - What’s the risk if they keep using infected systems?
  - How do you balance authority with cooperation?
- 

## Grades 3-5: Mystery Complications

### BREAKING NEWS!

### Situation:

Another classroom just reported the same problem—pop-ups on their computers too!

### Questions for the team:

- Is the problem spreading?
  - What should those students do?
  - Should we check all the classrooms?
- 

### BREAKING NEWS!

### Situation:

The student who clicked the email is really upset. They didn’t mean to cause problems!

### Questions for the team:

- Is it their fault?
  - How can we make them feel better?
  - What should everyone learn from this?
- 

### BREAKING NEWS!

### Situation:

Parents are starting to call the school asking what’s happening with the computers.

### Questions for the team:

- What should we tell the parents?
  - Should we tell them everything or wait until we know more?
  - Who should talk to the parents?
-

## Grades K-2: Fix It Team Surprises

### SURPRISE!

#### Situation:

After we turned on the computers, one of them still won't work!

#### Questions for the class:

- Should we try the same fix again?
  - Maybe there's a different problem?
  - Who should we ask for help?
- 

### SURPRISE!

#### Situation:

A student says they saw someone turn off the switch before. Maybe it wasn't an accident!

#### Questions for the class:

- Does it matter who turned it off?
- Should we find out what happened?
- What's most important—fixing it or finding out why?

*From “True Teamwork: Building Human-AI Partnerships” — NICE K12 2025 Dr. Ryan Straight, University of Arizona • ryanstraight@arizona.edu*