

Suspicious Behavior

"If You See Something, Say Something™" is a national campaign through the Department of Homeland Security that respects citizens' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties by emphasizing behavior, rather than appearance, in identifying suspicious activity. Factors such as race, ethnicity, and/or religious affiliation are not suspicious.¹

In other words, practice good **Situational Awareness** by being aware of your surroundings. Situational Awareness is:

- Paying attention to what is going on around you.
- The ability to scan the environment and sense danger, challenges and opportunities, while maintaining the ability to conduct normal activities.

What is Suspicious Behavior?

If it's suspicious to you, it's worth reporting it to 911. Examples include:

- All fights, screams and loud noises (such as explosions) should be reported.
- Vehicles driving slowly and aimlessly through neighborhoods, around schools or parking lots.
- Anyone peering into vehicles as they walk down the street or someone removing tags, gasoline or parts from a vehicle.
- An improperly parked vehicle or abandoned vehicle or someone leaving one vehicle and driving away in another may be signs of a stolen vehicle.
- Anyone being forced into a vehicle could be a victim of possible abduction.
- People who change their behavior when they notice they have been seen
- People dressed inappropriately for the weather or occasion, (i.e., heavy coat in warm weather)
- Abandoned parcels or other items in unusual locations (i.e. in a lobby or elevator)
- Someone trying to open a neighbor's door or window.
- A moving truck or van pulled up to a neighbor's home while they are gone. Remember, burglaries often occur at times when they should be most obvious (broad daylight, in full view of observers).

¹ Reporting Suspicious Activity. <https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something/what-suspicious-activity>

- Someone carrying property such as televisions, stereos, etc., at an unusually late hour or in an unusual place, especially if it does not appear that the property is newly purchased.
- The sound of shattering glass could signal a possible burglary, vandalism or larceny in progress.
- Persons loitering around schools, parks, and isolated areas or in the neighborhood.
- Offers of goods or repair work at an unusually low price could indicate stolen property or some type of fraud.
- Door-to-door solicitors without properly issued licenses and identification should be suspected.

When Do You Report Suspicious Behavior?

We urge you to call 911 when:

- **You believe someone is in physical danger.**
- **You believe a specific crime is happening.**
- **You believe something is suspicious.**

What makes it suspicious? Be able to explain to the 911 call taker why the behavior you are seeing/hearing is suspicious. What gives you the feeling that a crime is in progress or about to occur? Don't doubt your instincts. Call 911 and let the call taker evaluate and respond to the information you provide.

What Should You Think About When You Call?

- Where are you? Take a quick look around to make sure you know where you are.
- What just happened? Think about what you are trying to report and be ready to say, "I'm reporting a (crime, emergency or suspicious activity)."
- What information do I need to tell the call taker? Take a second to think about the people or vehicles you may need to describe.

How Do You Make the Call?

- You **dial 911**, the call taker answers, "911, what is your emergency/what are you reporting?"
- You respond, "I'm reporting a (crime or emergency)."

From this point on, let the call taker control the call and ask questions. The 911 call takers have a system and format they follow in order to get the most accurate information from you to send to the dispatchers. Allow them to follow their format and the call will go much quicker. If a question is asked for which you do not have an answer, it's okay to say, "I don't know." Call takers

may ask you if you wish to have contact with an officer. Saying "yes" can be a great help to investigating officers, enabling them to briefly call you or contact you in person to gain or confirm valuable details about a possible suspect in a crime. Please stay on the line with call takers until they tell you they have what they need and say it's okay to hang up.

Above all, stay calm. Callers often give incorrect information because they are stressed about the situation. Take a deep breath and look around. This will settle your mind, allow you to take in your surroundings, and allow you to assess any dangers related - or unrelated - to the situation.

What Does the 911 Call Taker Need to Know?

The 911 call taker is focused on what you are reporting *at that moment*. Information the call taker may ask for includes:

- What is happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Where are you in relation to what's happening?
- What made the person's actions suspicious?
- What did the person(s)/vehicle look like?
- Did the person say anything? If so, what?
- Were any weapons displayed or was there threat of a weapon?
- What was the person's last known location and direction of travel?

Describing People

When giving a description of a person to the call taker, first describe things they can't easily change:

- Race/skin tone, gender, age, hair, scars, marks, tattoos (i.e. White male, 30's, brown hair, heart tattoo on left bicep) Then describe their clothing from top to bottom and inside to outside:
- Blue hat, white t-shirt, black jacket, blue pants, white socks, grey tennis shoes Describe characteristics that make the person stand out:
- Walks with a limp, missing teeth, sweating profusely Give the person's last known location and direction of travel; where are they/which way did they go?
- Was heading north on 23rd Avenue South from South Walker Street

Describing Vehicles

If you are reporting a suspicious vehicle - or a suspicious person *in* a vehicle - please provide as much information about the vehicle as you can. Consider the acronym CYMMBALS"

- **Color** - If you don't know, give shade (Light colored - Dark colored)

- **Year** - If you don't know, a rough guess works (newer - 80's model - late 80's)
- **Make** - If you aren't sure, you can say "It looked like a ... (Pontiac, Hyundai, etc.)."
- **Model** - (Grand Am, Sonata) if you don't know, you can skip it.
- **Body** - 2 door (Coupe), 4 door (Sedan), Hatch back, Wagon or Van.
- **Accessories** - Roof Rack, Tinted Windows, Fancy Rims etc...
- **License Number** - If you can write it down or memorize it great. If not, relay as much as you can.
- **State** - If the license plate is from out-of-state, please say so.

Describe anything that makes the car stand out, such as any damage and the damage location, stickers, antennae balls, etc. . . . and last known location and direction of travel.

If you see something you know shouldn't be there—or someone's behavior that doesn't seem quite right—say something. Because only you know what's supposed to be in your everyday. Informed, alert communities play a critical role in keeping our nation safe.

"If You See Something, Say Something™" engages the public in protecting our homeland through awareness–building, partnerships, and other outreach.²

To report suspicious activity, contact your local law enforcement agency.

Describe specifically what you observed, including:

- **Who or what you saw;**
- **When you saw it;**
- **Where it occurred; and**
- **Why it's suspicious.**
- **If there is an emergency,**
- **Call 9–1–1.**

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² Ibid.