

Why Should I Call the Police?

The battle against crime is one which involves both police and citizens. The police cannot be everywhere. For this reason, the effective functioning of a police department is dependent on citizen cooperation and their resistance to crime. Many crimes would never be committed if more citizens would be alert to suspicious activity and take it upon themselves to notify the police. We need to know a problem exists and so do your neighbors. If it is not reported, we will not know a problem exists that needs attention.

When Should I Call the Police?

Whenever you observe suspicious activity, even though you may not be the only observer, call the police. Never rely on someone else to do what you should have done. The police would rather get multiple calls concerning the same incident than none at all.

Often people fail to act because they are not sure if what they are observing is worth reporting. A good rule to follow is when in doubt, call the police immediately. Don't wait to discuss the event with friends or neighbors first. Valuable police response time is lost this way.

Another concern is bothering the police by reporting suspicious activity that may be nothing at all. However, police would rather come and check it out. Even if there is no crime being committed, the police response may deter someone from committing a crime.

Crime Reporting

**Fire - Rescue - Police
Emergency
9-1-1**

**Police Non-Emergency
(703) 792-6500
Telecommunication Device
for the Deaf
TDD# (703) 590-4017
Crime Prevention Unit
703-792-7270**

SAVE TIME, REPORT ONLINE

****Do not use if it is an emergency
or a police response is needed****

If you have been the victim of a specific type of crimes and there is no suspect information, you may file a report online:

www.pwcgov.org/policereport

**Working With The
Police Department**



Crime Reporting Guide

**Prince William County Police
www.police.pwcgov.org**

Working with the Police

What number do I call?

9-1-1 - immediate threat to life or property, crime in progress

703-792-6500 – Suspicious activity, past occurrences, non-life threatening.

What do I need to tell them when I call?

WHAT happened or is happening

WHERE did it happen

WHEN did it happen

WHO did it

Provide Detailed Descriptions:

People:

- ☒ Gender
- ☒ Race
- ☒ Age
- ☒ Height / Weight
- ☒ Hair color / style / length
- ☒ Clothing
- ☒ Other identifying marks / traits ex) facial hair, glasses, tattoos, etc.

Vehicles:

- ☒ License Plate Number
- ☒ Color
- ☒ Make / Model / Year
- ☒ Direction of travel
- ☒ Other identifying features ex) dents, different colors, rust, etc

Call Priority

To ensure a rapid police response when you need it, the police department has a call priority system. High priority calls get immediate dispatch and response and consist of reports of crimes in progress or just occurred where there is a chance of apprehending a criminal, or where lives may be endangered. Low priority calls consist of reports of crimes that occurred some time ago where no suspects are on the scene. These calls are dispatched based on available police units, and may even be handled by telephone if possible.

If a situation changes / escalates, you need to call back and advise the calltaker so the call will receive the appropriate priority.

Do I have to give my name, phone number or address?

No, however, it is helpful to have that information in case we need to re-contact you for additional information. *Do* provide as much information as possible so the officer can handle the complaint.

Will an officer stop and talk to me?

Not unless you specifically request it. If you want to speak with an officer, tell the calltaker when you call.

Common reasons suspected criminal activity isn't reported:

"It's not my business" (but you may be the next victim)

"Someone else is reporting it" (but maybe not)

"I don't care what happens off my property" (but apathy breeds crime)

"It's the police department's job, not mine" (but the police depend on citizens to be their 'eyes and ears')

"I'm the victim and don't want to report it because it was just a minor theft" (but it could be part of a bigger problem and the police need to know)

What is Suspicious Activity?

Suspicious activity is really anything that "doesn't seem right". You know what activity is out of the ordinary for your neighborhood. Remember, when in doubt, call the police.

Examples of suspicious activity can include:

- ⇒ A stranger around your neighbor's house or vehicle while they are away.
- ⇒ The sound of breaking glass.
- ⇒ Anyone peering into vehicles or removing tags, gasoline, or auto parts.
- ⇒ An improperly parked car, or parked car with someone in it that seems out of place.
- ⇒ Someone carrying property such as TVs, stereos, construction tools, or burglary tools.
- ⇒ Apparent business transactions conducted from a vehicle or on street corners.
- ⇒ A constant flow of strangers to and from a particular house on a regular basis, especially at late hours.
- ⇒ A vehicle driving slowly through the neighborhood.