

Nuisance Drug Premises

Reporting Incidents

Generally if you have documented information, you can contact the police department via the non-emergency number (703-792-6500) or Vice and Narcotics Bureau Tip Line (703-686-6522). For any incident that is in progress or you need an officer to respond call 911.

Calling 911

Call 911 for any crime that is occurring, or if anyone is in immediate danger. Remain calm and speak clearly. Give brief, specific answers. Provide as many details as you can about the person or vehicle you are reporting, including direction of travel. Stay on the line until the call taker ends the call.

Non-Emergency Number 703-792-6500

If you need an officer to respond for an incident that is **not** an emergency, call the non-emergency number. Incidents include, but are not limited to, witnessing a drug transaction, suspicious persons or vehicles, loud parties, etc.

Start a Neighborhood Watch

You and your neighbors know what's going on in your neighborhood. Put that neighborhood know-how to work and organize your community to start a neighborhood watch. Contact the Crime Prevention Unit for more information at 703-792-7270.

Prince William County Police Department

Crime Prevention Unit

703-792-7270

crimeprevention@pwcgov.org

NON EMERGENCY

703-792-6500

EMERGENCY 911

NUISANCE DRUG PREMISES

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

What to do if you suspect drug activity
in your neighborhood



Prince William County
Police Department

In this brochure you will find basic information on nuisance drug premises, indicators for identifying a drug house, log sheets, and what citizens and law enforcement can do to combat this problem.

Citizens have the power to enact change. Every citizen should be willing to take on the responsibility of protecting the welfare of their neighborhood and their community. Drugs are a common problem and the only way that the problem can be resolved is with an **active** and **involved** community.

The information and contact that you have with law enforcement will be kept confidential. You can report incidents and ask not to be identified, but cooperation helps build viable cases.

Knowing what the law allows and what the authorities can and cannot do will save you a lot of frustration. Citizens must know and trust that the police will handle the information given to them professionally and properly. It is important to know the laws do not allow law enforcement to act on information of suspicion alone. If that were the case, drug houses could possibly be shut down immediately, but only at the sacrifice of our own freedoms.

The same Constitutional laws that protect law-abiding citizens also protect criminals. All citizens have the right to freedom from unlawful searches and seizures of their person, their vehicles and their homes. The same rules apply to you as they do to the occupants of the 'drug house' in your neighborhood. Law Enforcement will be as aggressive as the law will allow in ridding neighborhoods of crime, but it must be done appropriately.

Characteristics

- Garage door never open.
- Blinds always closed or windows boarded up.
- Chemical containers being brought in/out, or left around the premises.
- Drug paraphernalia found in neighborhood.
- Lots of 1-5 gallon jugs around the premises.
- Chemical or caustic smells emitting from the house or vehicles.
- Rough lumber construction being carried inside, people will sometimes build interior rooms to conceal marijuana grow operations.

Occupants

- Diminished hygiene.
- Occupants go outside to smoke.
- Occupants never leave/don't work.
- Occupant is awake or sleeps for days at a time.
- Unattended/neglected pets.
- Children not being watched/cared for/not going to school.
- Parties.
- Lots of young/teenage visitors, especially when the occupants do not have children of that age group.

Surroundings

- Increased crime in the neighborhood, especially crimes of opportunity like vehicle thefts and prowls.
- Other neighbors exhibiting unusual behavior, frequenting the suspected drug house or defending the occupants.

Possible Indicators

Certain activities are found to be common at drug houses. Generally one or two of these indicators does not mean you have a drug house in your neighborhood. Indicators are not evidence of a drug house. These are circumstances that accumulatively create a reasonable amount of suspicion that warrants further investigation. These are some possible indicators you can look for or that can be noted on a log sheet.

Traffic

- Vehicles stopping for short stays of 20 minutes or less, just long enough for someone to go in and make a buy.
- An inordinate number of vehicles.
- Cars left running with someone in the car while another runs inside.
- Multiple vehicles using signaling technique (ex. Horn or flashing lights)
- Influxes of increased traffic.
- People parking away from the premises and walking in.

Foot Traffic

- Unkempt, disoriented or paranoid visitors or other neighbors.
- Persons waiting outside for long periods of time— even in severe weather conditions.
- People carrying in tools, electronics or other items that may be used to sell or trade for drugs.
- Short term visits.
- Large number of visitors.

Change in Conditions

- Accumulations of trash or junk.
- Deterioration of the premises or grounds.
- Dismantling of vehicles, machinery, or other component items, that are not reassembled. Often the high gives them nervous energy to start projects but don't always have the ability to concentrate enough to put things back together.

Tangible, credible evidence needs to be collected in order to obtain a search warrant. Even after a search warrant is served, there are many processes that have to take place prior to trial; (ex: testing the drugs at a lab, preparing the case for trial). All of these things take time, sometimes months. And while all this is going on, the same suspects may be back at their house selling drugs again.

Diligence is one of the most successful traits needed to combat a drug house. These problems will not be resolved overnight. It takes collaborative efforts of citizens and the police to rid a neighborhood of a 'drug house'. There may be times when fear and frustration may make you want to just give up or move, but citizens must be committed to the long term in order to take their neighborhoods back.

Personal Safety

Personal Safety is your first priority. Most drug addicts and dealers commit other crimes. They are often suspicious, maybe even paranoid. They can be violent, or associate with other violent individuals.

Education

Educate yourself so you will know what to look for and what to watch out for. The more you know, the better you can protect yourself, and the better witness you will be.

Documentation

Documentation is the key to building a case against a drug house. Keep good, consistent records.

Accuracy

Accuracy is pivotal. The information you give to authorities must be correct and true to the best of your knowledge. Only give information you know to be true. Bolstering a statement or a 911 call to get a higher priority response may put you in jeopardy of violating perjury laws. You could be called on to testify to your statements, so they need to be without embellishment or speculation.

Neighborhood Activity Log

Never place yourself in any danger trying to gather information.

Always call 911 immediately if there is any reason to believe you or someone else is in danger **or that there is an in-progress crime being committed.**

| Date | Start Time | Activity Description | License Number | Vehicle Description | # of Persons | Name or Description of Each Person | End Time | Other | Initial |
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Filling out the log sheet:

Anytime there is a notable activity at the drug nuisance premises, it can be logged on this sheet. Use as many sheets as you need to accurately describe what you are observing..

Start with the **date** that the activity occurs on. The **start time** is when the activity is first observed, for example when a vehicle pulls in, when a person walks up, or when the occupant is out having a smoke in the middle of the night. Anything that is out of the ordinary or is typical, as described, as one of the “indicators”.

Describe the **activity** and why you feel it is noteworthy. Use descriptive words. Note any emotional response you feel such as surprise or fear. Also include any physical responses you may have such as burning eyes from a chemical odor.

Record vehicle **license numbers**. Also write a **vehicle description**. Include the color, make, model, number of doors, damage or alterations to the vehicle, or stickers and where they are placed. Sometimes the license number will not match the vehicle described because an “L” looks like an “I” or because the plate is switched or stolen. Use as many lines as you need to describe each vehicle. Note the **number of people** involved in an incident or activity and **describe each person**. Include clothing descriptions; they often wear the same clothes for days at a time and may match other criminal activity reports.

Note the time the activity **ends**, the person leaves, the loud music stops, or the lights that have been on all night finally go out. Then in the **other** box, add anything relevant to the incident, such as, that you called 911, or the name of other witnesses to the incident.

Then **initial** the log sheet at the end of the incident so that Law Enforcement has an accurate record of who was witness to what. Try to keep the log sheets numbered and **sign and date** the bottom of each when it is full as you would any witness statement.

Remember to just record what you actually observe, not what you think is going on, otherwise the statement is not valid.