

## Are You A Witness To A Crime?

- Was that a crime I just saw?
- Why was that man running through my neighbor's yard?
- Did those two people just exchange something in that car?
- Where are the police when you need them?

These, and many other, questions often go through the minds of people everywhere, everyday.

If these, or any similar questions, have gone through YOUR mind, you may have just witnessed a crime.

Often, people don't even realize that they have just witnessed a crime.

Sometimes they do.

If you think that you have witnessed a crime, or are observing some behavior that appears suspicious or criminal....there's only one thing to do....CALL THE POLICE!

Even if you only have limited information, you are still encouraged to call.

People are sometimes hesitant, too hesitant, to call

the police.

Often, a person doesn't want to "bother" the police.

Or maybe a person isn't quite sure if what he saw constitutes a crime and is embarrassed that when the police show up, he will be mocked or ridiculed for calling.

First of all, if you call the police you are not "bothering" them.

It's their job.

Secondly, citizens must act as the "eyes and ears" of the police.

The police can't be everywhere at once and they often rely on other people to let us know what is happening out there on the streets and in the neighborhoods.

OK, you've realized that you have just witnessed a crime.

**CALL THE POLICE!**

Don't hesitate.

If you are on your home phone or a pay phone, dial 911.

You will be immediately directed to an emergency operator.

If you are on your cellular phone, try 911.

Many cellular services now have 911 as a feature.

It's a good idea to check ahead of time in your area as to the emergency services on phone lines.

Don't try to call the local number for the police.

Usually, the local number will put you into the Records Department and you may waste valuable time.

What do I say when I call?

The operator on the phone will allow you to start explaining what you have seen.

Start by giving the operator a short description of what you observed.

The operator will guide you from there by

asking you questions that will narrow down the information so that the police can be dispatched.

Have the following information available (or as much as possible):

- What Happened (specifics, but keep it brief)
- Time of Occurrence and Location (when and where)
- Was Anyone Hurt? (ambulance needed?)
- How Many Suspects?
- Be prepared to give a full description...
- Suspect(s):
  - Gender
  - Race
  - Hair
  - Approximate Age
  - Clothing
  - Weapons?

Vehicle(s):

- License Plate
- Color
- Year
- Make
- Model
- Direction of Travel

*Example:*

I just saw someone break a car window with his

hand and steal a purse.

It was 2 minutes ago in front of 123 Main Street.

The offender was a white male in his late teens.

He had brown hair and was wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans.

He left in a red pickup truck with Illinois license plate 12345AB.

He was headed towards Smith Street (or North on Main, etc).

Sometimes people are worried about calling the police because they don't want the bad guys to find out.

That is completely understandable.

However, you are not obligated to give any of your personal information to the emergency operator.

You will be asked for this information, but you can tell them that you want to remain anonymous.

If you choose to give information, give them your name, phone number, and current location.

If an arrest is made, the officers will come and talk to you and get additional

information as needed.

Every time you see something that just doesn't look right...or when you see someone do something that you know is criminal, take it upon yourself to **CALL THE POLICE.**

Every bit of information that they get from you puts them one step closer to catching the bad guy and makes our neighborhoods a safer place to work, live, and play.