Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

CALLING 911

WHEN TO CALL 911

You should call 911 any time you observe a situation requiring an *immediate response* from law enforcement, the fire department, or an ambulance to save a life, prevent a serious injury, prevent serious property damage, stop/prevent a crime that is happening or about to happen, or respond to a crime that has just happened. Under a valid emergency situation, time is of the essence and an immediate response can make the difference between life and death. ***In any emergency, immediately call 911***. If you need to report circumstances to law enforcement that do not constitute an emergency, use the non-emergency number, (304)485-8501. However, ***when in doubt, call 911***.

DO THE FOLLOWING WHEN CALLING 911

We recommend that all Neighborhood Watchers identify themselves to the dispatcher as members of Neighborhood Watch when placing any call to 911. By doing so you will let the dispatcher know that you are a trained observer in a semi-official position; this will provide you with enhanced credibility in the mind of the dispatcher. Keeping in mind that the dispatcher will always ask for your location first, it is recommended that your call should start something like this:

- **Dispatcher:** "911 — *where* is your emergency?"
- **You:** First provide the nature of the call and the location, then identify yourself. "I want to report a possible burglary in progress at 1276 Maple Street. My name is John Smith and I'm a Neighborhood Watch Captain (or Member)."
- Provide the dispatcher with as much of the following information as you can:
    - Specify the nature of the emergency, i.e., police, fire, or medical.
    - The location of the emergency. Be as specific as possible and provide the address and nearest cross street when possible.
    - What emergency or crime has happened, is happening, or is about to happen, e.g., robbery in progress, house on fire, person unconscious, etc.
    - If weapons are involved, advise the type of weapon being used, e.g., knife, handgun, rifle, shotgun.
    - Number of persons involved (both perpetrators and victims) in the emergency or crime. Are minors involved?
    - When asked, provide the best possible description you can of the perpetrator(s).
- Provide the dispatcher with your call-back phone number if asked. This is so the dispatcher can call you back in the event the call gets interrupted before responders arrive.
- The dispatcher will probably ask you to stay on the line until the emergency responders arrive. Be ready to tell the dispatcher what is happening, or if any conditions change.

- If you are out of doors in the vicinity of the emergency situation, the dispatcher will likely ask for your description and the description of your vehicle (if any) so responders will be able to recognize you upon their arrival and distinguish you from the perpetrator(s).

Do exactly as the dispatcher and the first responders tell you during the course of the call and the emergency situation. Give them all the information or other assistance they desire under the circumstances. Remember, your assistance could mean the difference between, life, death, or serious injury.

COOPERATING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Preventing crime in your community is a cooperative effort between you and your local police or sheriff's department. As has been pointed out, you must do your part by acting as your police department's eyes and ears. When communicating or working with your police department, follow this checklist:

- Tell the dispatcher or law enforcement only what you *really* know or have *actually* observed. If you are only estimating or generalizing, be sure to say so.
- Do *not* exaggerate your experience or observations; keep them as factual as possible.
- Make yourself available for interviews, attend police line-ups if requested, and don't be afraid to identify the suspect, but *be sure of that identification.*
- If, after you have been interviewed by law enforcement, you remember or think of something about the crime or suspect that you did not tell them, *immediately write it down* and call law enforcement on the non-emergency line. Remember, the information you give law enforcement may be one of the few things they will have to work with.
- Testify in court if requested. Fully cooperate with your prosecuting attorney. Your testimony is vital in many cases for the conviction of criminals.

STAY INVOLVED

Stay actively involved in your Neighborhood Watch Program. Remember to apply what you have learned in your Neighborhood Watch training, from these procedures, and from our website. By doing this you will make your community a better and safer place to live!

RELATED SOPS AND FORMS

SOPs

- Calling Law Enforcement
- How to Observe and Report
- Increasing Your Power of Observation
- How to Detect Suspicious Activities
- Obtain Details About the Suspect(s)
- How to Obtain a Vehicle Description

Forms

- Incident Report Form
- Suspect Identification Form