



Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



CALLING LAW ENFORCEMENT

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

Whenever it becomes necessary for you to call emergency services, *you must first determine* whether or not this is an actual *emergency*. An **emergency** exists when law enforcement, fire, or emergency medical assistance is necessary 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 the police that do *not* constitute an emergency, use the non-emergency number. In Wood County that number is (304) 485-8501. However, ***when in doubt, call 911***.



IT'S OK TO BE WRONG

Your local law enforcement agencies and 911 dispatchers know and understand that their citizens can't always be right about what they think is a suspicious or wrongful activity. All that they ask is that you ***call them*** whenever you think or feel that something wrong is happening.

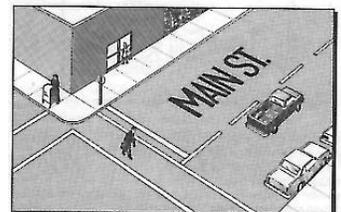
WHEN TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT

You should call the police *any* time and *every* time you suspect that something is wrong, suspicious, dangerous, criminal, or possible trouble of any nature has occurred, is occurring, or is about to occur. Follow this rule: ***any time you think something is wrong, dangerous, or suspicious, immediately call the police (no exceptions)!***

The bottom line is this: if you call in what you believe is an emergency and it turns out that it is *not* an emergency, the very worst that can happen is that a police officer might be slightly inconvenienced for a few minutes. However, if it *is* an actual emergency and you treat it as a non-emergency, someone may die. ***If you must err, always err on the side of public safety!***

KNOW YOUR DIRECTIONS

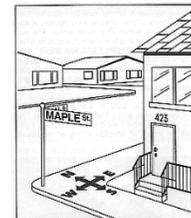
Your ability to give the 911 dispatcher a specific location requires that you know the basic directions of your area and the name of streets or other identifying points within your community. The way to determine your direction is first to know which way is north, and from that you can determine south, east, and west. You can determine which is north by looking on your city's map (north will always be at the top of the map). Carefully study a map of your city or community and know your points of direction. Know all of your neighborhood's street names and how they run (north and south, east and west, etc.). Try to give all your directions to police or 911 based upon north, south, east, and west. For example, "I saw the suspect going east



on Main Street.” Avoid telling the police that the suspect turned right or left, as this often makes the points of direction wrong or impossible to determine. If you are uncertain as to the compass direction, use landmarks; for example, “The suspect was walking toward the courthouse on Market Street from Sixth Street.”

KNOW YOUR LOCATION

It is important for you to give the police the best possible location of the trouble or suspicious activity. For example, it would be of little help for you to say that someone was breaking into a house on Maple Street. In order for the police to respond to this call on Maple Street, they would need specific information about where and how the house was being broken into. You must be able to give them a specific location or at least try to pinpoint it to a specific location.



Your call to the police should go something like this: “Someone is breaking into the house at 423 Maple Street, though the south back window,” or “Somebody is breaking into the house on the southeast corner of Maple and Main Streets.” By providing the police with this specific location, you will greatly help them quickly and accurately respond to your call.

HOW TO REPORT A CRIME

Here’s how to report a crime to your local police.

- Immediately call the police. See the section on “Dialing 911.”
- Tell the police as factually as possible what events are occurring or have occurred. That is, briefly state the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the situation.
- Give the best possible description of the suspect(s). See “Obtain Details About the Suspect.”
- If a vehicle is involved, give the police the best possible description of the vehicle. See “Vehicle Descriptions.”
- Provide the police with any other data or information they desire.

EXAMPLE OF A POLICE EMERGENCY SITUATION

You observe someone breaking in through the back window of your neighbor’s house. You know that your neighbors are not at home since they are on vacation. This is an emergency situation since immediate assistance is necessary to apprehend the criminal. Immediately call 911. Your call should sound something like this: “I want to report a possible burglary in progress at 423 Maple Street. I just saw someone breaking into my neighbor’s house at that address, and they are on vacation. The suspect entered through the rear south window.” At this point you should follow the dispatcher’s instruction and provide as much help or additional data (description of the suspect, his vehicle, etc.) as you can. It is important in an emergency situation, like this burglary, that the police be notified immediately, as burglars usually move very quickly, and a quick police response is necessary.

KNOW YOUR EMERGENCY SERVICES’ NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER

Memorize your local 911 Center’s non-emergency phone number and have it saved in your phone so you can have it readily available when needed. In Wood County, all

emergency services (law enforcement, fire, and ambulance) request that all phone calls be routed through the Central Communications (911) Center at (304) 485-8501, whether you are reporting an emergency or not. Remember: for non-emergencies anywhere in Wood County call (304) 485-8501; for emergencies call 911.

EXAMPLE OF NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

It is 2:20 a.m. and you hear loud music in your neighborhood. It is obvious to you that somebody has the radio on loud, but nothing indicates that immediate police or fire department assistance is necessary. You, of course, want the loud music to stop since you are unable to sleep. You would simply call Central Communications using the regular, non-emergency phone number. You would not call 911 since this is not an emergency that requires immediate assistance from the police to protect life or property.

Another example of a non-emergency situation: in the morning you go out to your car and attempt to start it, and it won't start. You open the hood and discover that your car's battery has been stolen. It is obvious that the battery was stolen during the night, as nobody is around or near your car at this time. This is *not* an emergency situation as there is no need for the police to render immediate assistance since your battery has already been stolen. You should report the theft to the police using the non-emergency phone number, not 911.

RELATED SOPS AND FORMS

SOPs

- Calling 911
- 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