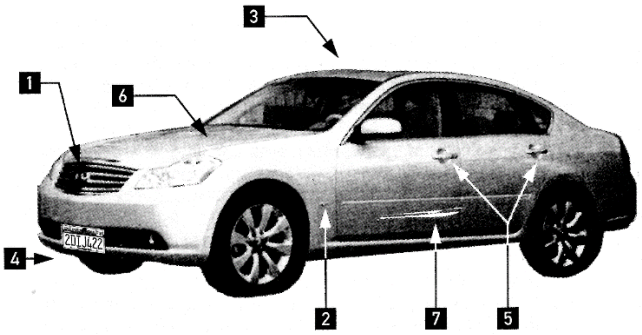
Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

How to Obtain a Vehicle Description

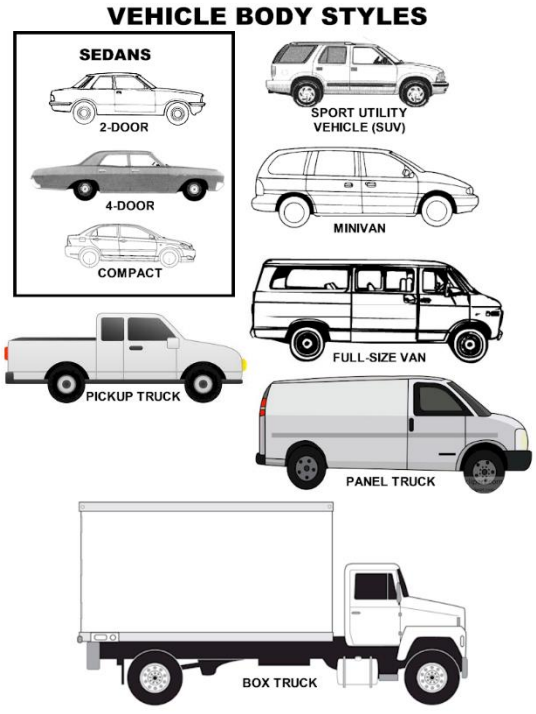
When you observe a suspicious, unusual, or criminal act involving a vehicle, it is very important that you obtain the best possible description and the license plate number of that vehicle. You need to be as accurate as you can in describing the vehicle so the police will be able to locate it and the suspicious person(s) involved.



1. Make - Chevrolet, Ford, Buick, etc.
2. Model- Mustang, Accord, Camry, etc.
3. Auto Type - Sedan, truck, van, etc.
4. License Plate - State and number
5. Body Style - Convertible, two-door, four-door, etc.
6. Color - What color(s) and shade(s) of color
7. Other Identifying Features - Decals, dents, broken windows, etc.
8. Year - Estimate if you don't know; e.g., new, late model, old, older model

MEMORY HELPER

You can remember a car or vehicle description by learning the simple word "CLAMMY." Here is how to remember. Just say the word CLAMMY and remember to associate each letter of the word with these values:



- **C**olor - Try to be as specific as you can regarding the color. For example, if you see a car that is blue in color, remember if it is light or dark blue. Also, describe, if you can, whether the vehicle is multi-colored or two-tone in color.
- **L**icense Plate - See the section on license plates below
- **A**uto Type - What kind of vehicle is it? Car, sports car, SUV, van, camper, motor home, pick-up truck, moving van, box truck, flatbed truck, Jeep (or other "off-road" vehicle, motorcycle, etc.
- **M**ake of Vehicle - The "make" is the manufacturer: Chevy, Ford, Chrysler, Honda, Volvo, Volkswagen, Buick, BMW, etc.

- **M**odel of Vehicle - The model is the particular style of vehicle the manufacturer makes; e.g., Accord, Camry, Mustang, Wrangler, etc.
- **Y**ear of Manufacture - What is the year of the vehicle? If you don't know, tell the police that you are only estimating what you think the year of the vehicle is. If you don't know the year of the vehicle, just make a general estimate such as: a new car, a late model, a couple of years old, an old car, a "beater."

Other Identifying Features. Are there any other identifying features that stand out about this vehicle, such as significant dents or other body damage, bumper stickers or other decals, highly tinted windows, broken windows, or anything else that would help describe and identify the vehicle?

LICENSE PLATE NUMBERS

Your ability to observe and remember the license plate number of a vehicle involved in suspicious or criminal activity is vitally important for your police department to know.

Write Down the License Number. When you first observe a suspicious vehicle, immediately write down the vehicle description and license plate number exactly as you have observed it. Write down complete vehicle description (body style, color, make, model, color, etc.). Write down the license number from left to right. Be careful to not transpose or change the numbers and letters around when writing. If you can't get all the information, just get the best description you can. If you are carrying a smart phone, use your notepad app to record the information and take a picture when possible.

State Which Issued the License Plate. Make sure to remember and note the state that issued the license plate. Be familiar with your neighboring state's license plates and how to recognize them. If you observe an out-of-state plate, be sure to tell the police what state it is from. If you can't tell what state, describe the color of the plate's background and numbers, plus anything else that you can remember, such as a Georgia peach, Ohio buckeye, or Florida orange. Also remember that some states require plates on both the front and back of the vehicle; remembering if there was a plate on the front will help the police narrow down the issuing state.

No License Plate on Vehicle. Sometimes suspicious vehicles that are used in the commission of criminal activity (like a getaway car) have the license plate removed to make it more difficult to identify the vehicle. You should *always* be suspicious of any vehicle that does not have a license plate. In this case, provide the best possible description you can of the vehicle and its occupants.

WEST VIRGINIA LICENSE PLATE STYLES

West Virginia has numerous styles of special and personalized license places. Neighborhood Watchers in West Virginia should become familiar with these various styles in order to effectively report them to law enforcement.

MEMORIZING LICENSE PLATE NUMBERS

It is important that you are able to memorize a license plate number quickly since you may not have time to write it down. You can train yourself to do this with a little practice and the help of memorizing the phonetic alphabet used by law enforcement. All the emergency service agencies in Wood County use the standard military phonetic alphabet; many

other jurisdictions use what is considered a national "standard" law enforcement phonetic alphabet.

Most license plates consist of a cluster of letters and numbers that constitute the full plate number. For example, the license plate number "ADM836" has an alphabetical cluster of "ADM" and a numerical cluster of "836". It will be easier for you to observe and recall the license plate number by breaking the plate down into these alphabetical and numerical parts. You would first observe the "ADM" (from the left of the plate) and then moving to the right to the numbers "836." The license plate number "390 IZD" would be read phonetically (in Wood County) as "thuh-*ree nie*-yen *zee*-roh (not "oh") India Zulu Delta." Note that it is often difficult to distinguish between a numeric zero and an alphabetic letter "O" (oh).

Remember, when memorizing the license plate number to read it from left to right. Also, try to remember license plate frames that have a personalized message and report that information to law enforcement.

THE PHONETIC ALPHABET

For clarity in verbal communication and the avoidance of transmission errors, the phonetic alphabet is used by law enforcement and other emergency services, as well as in military and amateur radio communications world-wide. This phonetic alphabet will also help you recall license plate numbers through the association of the license plate letters to the phonetic named object or person represented by the letters. The more your mind can associate something with something else, the better it will remember or recall. For example, the license plate number "167 MTW" would be easily recalled by saying to yourself, "one six seven Mike Tango Whisky." However, you might be able to remember is more readily by using something that is ridiculous (and thus easier to remember) like, "a hundred and sixty seven my tomato won." For some people, the mind will associate "167" (a hundred sixty-seven) as a single number (one thing to remember) instead of three separate numbers (things) to remember. The dumber the phrase sounds, the easier it will be to remember. If you get the wrong word, it isn't the end of the world. Any word that starts with the correct letter will be very helpful when calling 911.

Military Phonetic Alphabet **(Used in Wood County)**			
A - Alpha	H - Hotel	O - Oscar	V - Victor
B - Bravo	I - India	P - Papa	W - Whisky
C - Charley	J - Juliet	Q - Quebec	X - X-ray
D – Delta	K - Kilo	R - Romeo	Y - Yankee
E - Echo	L - Lima	S - Sierra	Z – Zulu
F - Foxtrot	M - Mike	T - Tango	
G - Golf	N - November	U - Uniform	

Standard Police Phonetic Alphabet (Used by Many Jurisdictions)			
A - Adam	H - Henry	O - Ocean	V - Victor
B - Boy	I - Ida	P - Paul	W - William
C - Charles	J - John	Q - Queen	X - X-ray
D - David	K - King	R - Robert	Y - Young
E - Edward	L - Lincoln	S - Sam	Z - Zebra
F - Frank	M - Mary	T - Tom	
G - Georg	N - Nora	U - Union	

Beware of Covered Plates

Be suspicious when you can't read the license plate number of a vehicle because it is covered, dirty, damaged, or has letters/numbers taped over the original plate. Obtain the best description of the vehicle and call the police. Tell them about the license plate, how it has been covered or obstructed, and why you can't read it.

Practice Exercise

You can become good at remembering license plate numbers with just a little practice. First study and memorize the phonetic alphabet used in your jurisdiction. While you are riding or driving in a car, practice observing license plates and then say to yourself, "This license plate number (WVT972) is Whisky Victor Tango Nine Seven Two." The more often you do this exercise, the more readily you will be able to memorize license plate numbers.

West Virginia Special Plates

West Virginia has several special-plate series that have a two-character prefix to the basic number, and these need a special method of reporting. Here are three examples. Left to right are the Sesquicentennial (150th Anniversary), Classic Car, and Whitewater Rafting plates. These would be pronounced and reported to law enforcement as follows: "Sesquicentennial [or just "SQ"] plate Sierra over Quebec zero zero zero zero zero zero;" "Classic Car plate Charley over Charley one five five seven;" and "Whitewater plate Whisky over Romeo zero zero zero zero."

150th Anniversary | Classic Car | Whitewater Rafting