

Guidelines for Reporting Suspicious Activities

The Stoneleigh COP encourages ALL Residents to be aware of your surroundings at all times and be willing to report suspicious activity to appropriate officials.

Many times people notice something suspicious but don't call the Police Department because they assume someone else has called. Don't assume! Make the call – if the suspicious activity has already been reported, the radio dispatcher will tell you.

To report Emergencies or Suspicious Activity, call #911

[Important Notes]:

If it is not an emergency and you are reporting suspicious activity, only call when you are in a safe place and away from any potentially dangerous situation.

When the 911 Operator answers your call, state that "This is a non-emergency", as you may be transferred to a non-emergency operator to keep the emergency lines available to other callers.

Whenever possible try to call from a land-line phone. If you are calling from a cell phone, make sure you specify your location (Baltimore County) because Baltimore City Police may receive your call based on the cell phone tower closest to your location.

What exactly is a "suspicious activity"?

Basically anything that seems out of the ordinary or "out of place" even slightly could be criminal activity and should be reported to law enforcement officials.

Some of the obvious things to watch for:

- **Anyone peering into parked cars** – they may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables inside the car.
- **Persons loitering in the neighborhood who do not live there** – they could be burglars.
- **Persons loitering around schools, parks or secluded areas** could be sex offenders.
- **A scream heard anywhere** may mean an assault or a robbery.
- **A person being forced into a car** – this could be abduction, domestic violence or a sexual offense.
- **A stranger entering your neighbor's house or garage** – it could be a burglar.
- **A beam from a flashlight in a neighbor's home**, especially if they are away. It could be a burglar.
- **The sound of breaking glass or loud noises** – it could mean an accident, burglary or vandalism.
- **Open or broken doors or windows at a home.** If the owners are absent, this could mean a burglary is in progress or was just completed.
- **Anyone removing accessories, such as license plates or gas, from a vehicle.**
- **Person wearing or carrying bloody clothing.** Could be a victim or a suspect in the commission of a serious crime.

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What exactly is a “suspicious activity”? (Continued)

Not so obvious things to watch for:

Not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal. Many legitimate people are in our neighborhood all the time. However, some criminals do take advantage of this fact by assuming the appearance of salespeople, repairmen, utility and city workers.

You can protect yourself by checking the identification of all solicitors, repairmen, meter readers or city workers. You should never allow anyone to enter your house unless you are expecting them and have requested they do so. If anyone shows up unexpectedly, even if they are wearing a uniform or marked car and they ask to enter your home, do not let them in.

Watch out for the following:

- **Anyone going door-to-door** with offers of merchandise at low prices – this could be stolen property.
- **Someone going door-to-door**, if after a few houses are visited, one or more persons tries to open a door, looks into a window, or goes to a back or side yard. This can be even more suspicious if one person stays at the door while another person goes to the back or side yard.
- **Human and vehicular traffic** to and from a certain residence on a daily or regular basis; especially if it happens during late or unusual hours. This could mean drug or vice activities are taking place.
- **Persons taking a short cut through a back yard.** They may have broken into someone’s home.
- **Parked vehicles occupied with one or more persons** – if it is an unusual hour or you don’t recognize the vehicle – the occupants could be lookouts for a burglar.
- **Vehicles moving slowly** and without lights and/or circling your block numerous times, particularly in the area of the school or pool. The occupants may be searching for a person to rob or home/business to burglarize, or they may be involved in drug or sex offenses.
- **Vehicles being loaded with valuable items** in front of an unattended residence.
- **Person running who does not appear to be exercising**, especially if carrying anything. They could be fleeing a burglary.
- **Persons casually walking through the neighborhood looking into cars, backyards, etc.** They could be looking to burglarize a car or a home.
- **Abandoned vehicles parked on the block.** This could be a stolen vehicle.
- **Persons making a quick change of vehicles.** These individuals may be attempting to elude the police or they are abandoning a stolen vehicle.

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Reporting Suspicious Activities to the Police:

Suspicious Persons:

When reporting suspicious persons, provide as much detail as possible. Start with the basics and get more specific. One reliable method to consistently make good suspect descriptions is to begin at the head and work your way down.

Here is a list of items you can describe when providing a suspect description:

- Sex – male or female
- Race – Caucasian, African-American, Asian or Hispanic or other
- Age
- Height and weight
- Hair color and style
- Complexion – skin tone, imperfections
- Speech – accent, slurred, vulgar
- Scars – tattoos, facial hair, glasses
- General appearance – dirty, well-groomed
- Clothing – color, style, shoes, jewelry

Suspicious Vehicles:

When reporting suspicious vehicles, provide as much information as possible about the vehicle, its occupants, the license plate or any identifying marks or characteristics, its activities and direction of travel. If you have a paper and pen/pencil handy, write down the information so you can read it to the police.

Review this list of items to report:

- Make – (Ford, Chevrolet, Honda)
- Model – (Escort, Impala, Pick-up truck)
- Year
- Color
- License plate number and state
- Bumper stickers, damage or dents, lettering
- Direction of travel – (“east on Stoneleigh road”)
- Occupants – (“one male and one female about high school age”)

When reporting locations of suspicious activities, provide as much information as possible. An exact location and specific address is always best if possible.