

How to Report A Crime In Progress

1. **ALWAYS CALL 911.** Even if it seems minor. Every time you call, it sends a message to police command that there is an unsafe situation in the area, and in general, police will be assigned to investigate, unless there are more serious events in progress that require their presence.
2. **When you call**, our 911 center will usually say: "911, what's your emergency?" You should tell the call-taker what the emergency is, for example: "There's someone breaking into my home!"
3. **911 will ask you questions:** The 911 call center follows a protocol to ask you a series of questions to quickly obtain information for dispatching the right responders to the right location.

Patiently answer all the questions the call-taker asks you. It can be difficult to be patient when you're terrified, but if you can remain as calm as possible and answer questions clearly, things will go much faster. When seconds count, you don't want to waste any time repeating yourself, or screaming while the call-taker tries to calm you down.

It may seem to you the dispatcher may be "wasting time" or asking redundant, ridiculous, and even invasive questions. But 911 is keeping you on the phone to get the most accurate information to assist officers with helping a victim and/or in apprehending a suspect. In fact, **911 has usually already dispatched the call to the field.** While you are speaking to them, these real-time updates are immediately relayed to the responding officers. These questions include:

- **Location, Location, Location.** Try to remain calm and remember the most important detail is **LOCATION**. The police department can't help if they don't know where you are. If you don't know the exact address, a street name and a hundred block, or closest intersection helps. Landmarks are good for most dispatch staff as well. If you are in an apartment building, the floor and unit number are important, too. Whatever fancy technology you have seen on television is not real life and the police needs this information from the caller.
- **What happened?** Was it a crime or an accident? 911 will ask direct questions to try and find out what the officers will be dealing with at the scene.
- **Is anyone injured?** Is medical assistance necessary?
- **Are/were any weapons involved?** If so what kind of weapon(s)? Where is the weapon now?
- **Is the suspect still there?** Is he/she still in the area? Who is the suspect? **What do they look like? The dispatcher will prompt you for a general physical description such as race, height, weight, hair color and clothing the suspect is wearing.**
- **If the suspect left, try to get a direction of travel.** Did they leave on foot or in a vehicle? If they left in a vehicle, try to get a description of the vehicle (i.e.. color, make, model, body style and license plate). Be sure to note if there was anything unusual about the vehicle (i.e.. camper, bumper stickers, broken windshield, tinted windows, etc.) The dispatcher will ask for this information and prompt you for answers.

Try not to panic, and if you can't help it, then at least try to speak clearly.

4. Never hang up on 911! Many 911 centers can tell you exactly what to do until help arrives, such as providing step-by-step instructions to aid someone who is choking or needs first aid or CPR. **Do not hang up** until the call-taker instructs you to do so.