July 2022

A Safer Naper --- If It Concerns You, It Concerns Us

It's often said that crime prevention is everyone's responsibility. Ensuring a safe community requires a partnership between the police and the residents, businesses and visitors they protect. This month, the Naperville Police Department's Safer Naper campaign teaches you how to partner with police by recognizing and reporting suspicious and criminal activity.

SECTION 1 – Suspicious Behavior & Situational Awareness

What is Situational Awareness?

Situational awareness is staying alert, avoiding distractions and being aware of your surroundings. By practicing situational awareness, you can avoid being in dangerous situations and even identify criminal behavior. Here are a few tips to help you hone this personal safety skillset:

- **Identify Your Surroundings:** The first step in achieving situational awareness is to become aware of what is around you. Identify the type of environment are you in (i.e., large crowd compared to a secluded area). Observe other people and their actions.
- **Avoid Complacency:** Actively keep yourself in the right mindset. Never assume that because you've done something safely before that nothing will happen this time. Continue to challenge yourself and those around you to be prepared for contingencies. Do a mental check every now and then.
- **Have a Plan:** Talking with your family about what to do in different situations will prepare them for when it happens. Knowing what to do beforehand will allow you to stay calm and better handle the situation. Create preparedness and response plans with your family to address likely risks.
- **Trust Your Feelings:** Listen to your gut. When you have a feeling that something is wrong, trust it. It is better to be wrong and safe than ignore the feeling and expose you or your family to danger.

What is Suspicious Activity?

So, what are you looking for when you're practicing situational awareness? Simply put, suspicious activity is an occurrence that is out of place in your neighborhood or surroundings. Remember people are not suspicious; their behavior is.

Some examples of suspicious activity could include:

- A person wearing or carrying bloody clothing. This could be a victim or a suspect in the commission of a serious crime.
- Persons loitering around schools, parks or secluded areas.
- 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 or business. If the owners are absent, this could mean a burglary is in progress or was just completed.
- A person entering or leaving a place of business after-hours. This could mean a burglary.
- Anyone peering into parked cars. They may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables to take from inside the car.
- Persons loitering in the neighborhood who do not live there. They could be burglars.

It's important to remember, however, that not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal. Many legitimate people are in our neighborhoods all the time. However, some criminals do take advantage of this fact by assuming the appearance of salespeople, landscapers, repairmen, utility workers and city employees.

Here are some additional things to look for:
- Someone going door-to-door. If after a few houses are visited, one or more persons tries to open a door, looks in 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 shortcut through a back yard. They may have broken into someone's home or be looking to break into a home.
- Parked vehicles occupied with one or more persons, especially 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 areas of schools, parks and playgrounds). 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 or a business after normal hours.
- A 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 could be abandoning a stolen vehicle.

Remember, trust your INSTICTS. If something does not look or feel right, report it immediately to 911. If it concerns you, it concerns us!

SECTION 2 – How to Report Something

Calling 911

Call 911 for police, fire or medical emergencies when immediate action is required. That could include calling to have an officer respond to check out suspicious activity you noticed, when a crime is in progress, or when someone's life, health, safety or property is in immediate danger.

If you aren't sure if your situation is an emergency, you should err on the side of safety and call 911 and let the emergency dispatchers make the decision.

View more tips regarding calling 911 [link to pdf flyer]

[insert Calling 911 video here: https://youtu.be/4GI58GDZuY8]

Text to 911
Naperville's Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) also accepts emergency texts to 911 from individuals who need immediate assistance but can't talk to a 911 dispatcher. Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile/Sprint customers within Naperville can text their exact location and the nature of their emergency to 911, and a dispatcher will respond.

It is still preferred that citizens make a voice call 911 if possible, as it is faster and more reliable. However, using Text to 911 in an emergency might be helpful for individuals needing emergency assistance who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, or are suffering a medical emergency that has rendered them unable to speak. It can also be used in situations where it is not safe to place a voice call to 911.

Learn more about Text to 911

[insert Text to 911 video here: https://youtu.be/zAM0ljG0ID8]

Online Reporting
The Naperville Police Department encourages you to use our online reporting system to file non-emergency police reports. This simple online system gives you the ability to submit reports to our department at a time that's convenient for you while also freeing up patrol officers to answer emergency calls and conduct proactive patrols.

Here are the types of incidents you <u>CAN</u> report online:
- Lost or stolen property (e.g., driver's license, passport, purse, wallet, keys, medication, yard signs/flags, delivered packages, license plates, jewelry, garbage bin, cell phone, laptop)
- Civil matters (e.g., verbal arguments, child custody issues, neighborhood disputes)
- Criminal damage to property (e.g., damage to vehicles not as a result of an accident – like broken windows, slashed tires and keyed vehicle, damaged mailboxes/posts, broken windows, damaged yard decorations)
- Nuisances (e.g., abandoned vehicles, overnight parking complaints, and ordinance violations like damage to street signs, burned out streetlights and overgrown yards)
- Identity theft (e.g., unauthorized use of your personal information to open accounts, unlawful use of a credit card)

In some circumstances, it would NOT be appropriate to use the online reporting system because the nature of the call merits an officer's response. In those cases, please dial 911.

[Learn more about online reporting](#)

Crime Stoppers
Crime Stoppers encourages community members to assist local law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime by providing tips about a crime or incident AFTER it has occurred. Do not use Crime Stoppers to report crimes or incidents happening now.

Crime Stoppers provides a safe and comfortable environment for citizens to provide information. Simply call the hotline at (630) 420-6006 and leave your tip. You may remain anonymous and if your tip results in an arrest you may be rewarded up to $1,000!

[Learn more about Crime Stoppers](#)

SECTION 3 – How NOT to Report Something

Social Media
The use social media is a common way many people communicate. Social media is used to disseminate important information on various platforms. Unfortunately, many are using it at the sole way to report a crime or spread misinformation. A crime, suspicious person or event cannot be investigated unless the police know about it. Call 911 rather than just posting about it.

Crime Stoppers
As stated earlier, Crime Stoppers enables citizens to provide anonymous tips about a crime or incident AFTER it has occurred. Do not use Crime Stoppers to report in-progress crimes or incidents requiring an immediate response from an officer.

Online Reporting
As stated earlier, Naperville PD's online reporting system allows citizens to file non-emergency police reports. It should not be used to report in-progress incidents or any incident that merits an officer's response.

Here are a few instances in which you should NOT use the online reporting system:
- Emergencies or an immediate police response is needed
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Hit-and-run Involving a vehicle
- Burglary to a motor vehicle (Note: This is when unlawful entry is made to a vehicle and property is stolen from inside.)
- Any in-progress incident (e.g., loud parties, barking dogs, speeding vehicles, etc.)
- Assault or battery (Note: This includes any incident where someone is struck by another person, whether injury occurred or not. This includes domestic related battery.)
- Incidents occurring outside of the City of Naperville

- Incidents that have already been documented by the Naperville Police Department. (Note: To add information to an existing report, locate the original report number and notify the officer who took the initial report or our front desk officers at (630) 420-6666.)