

Spotting and Reporting Suspicious Activity



The following information was provided by the Tallahassee Police Department to help you recognize and report suspicious activity that might indicate the potential for criminal activity. Remember, taking a proactive approach to crime and trust your instincts. Always call TPD at 891-4200 or the Leon County Sheriff's Office at 922-3300 with reports of suspicious activity or suspicious individuals.

Despite the best efforts of law enforcement and neighborhood groups, crimes are committed daily in communities everywhere. The best response is to remain vigilant by taking reasonable steps to secure your property and become involved by reporting potential criminal activity. **Be Alert – Not Afraid!** Fear creates panic within communities.

The Tallahassee Police Department is committed to partnering with neighborhood groups and educating the community on **situational awareness**. In most cases you are in control of the circumstances in which you place yourself. Just by being **aware** that you are a potential victim of crime is the first step toward prevention.

Neighborhood Watch groups frequently ask why certain types of crimes are being committed in their neighborhood and what types of activity they should report to law enforcement. The following are some guidelines to assist with reporting activity.

Who is committing crimes in your neighborhood?

- Suspects who live in your neighborhood
- Suspects who live in other neighborhoods in Tallahassee
- Suspects who live in other cities and have traveled to your neighborhood to commit crimes

How do I know what is “Suspicious”?

Identifying suspicious activity is not a difficult science. Rely on your judgment. Your perception of suspicious behavior could simply be based on a “feeling” that something “doesn’t look right”. Your suspicions will be based on:

- Experience
- Judgment
- Common sense

If you have any doubt, call the police – you may help prevent a crime.

Unusual or suspicious activity does not necessarily mean that a crime is happening, but be aware of the following suspicious behaviors:

- Individuals avoiding eye contact/trying not to be noticed
- Individuals departing quickly when seen or approached
- Individuals in places they don’t belong (walking out of someone’s back yard!)
- Over dressed for the type of weather
- Any type of activity or circumstance that seems frightening or unusual within the normal routines of your neighborhood, community, and workplace.

Learn to recognize the difference between normal and abnormal behavior. It can be a fine line. Stay alert in your daily travels and routines and get to know:

- Who your neighbors are
- What cars are normally in your neighborhood
- Who regularly walks or jogs in your neighborhood

Staying alert is **NOT** about becoming paranoid. Staying alert is being aware of one's surroundings. Be alert to indications of possible trouble. They may include:

- A local activity that could indicate problems in your neighborhood, (i.e. door to door soliciting)
- Previous activity or crimes.
- Recurring trends or seasonal crime patterns
- Recurring sightings of suspicious persons and/or vehicles

What To Do If You Spot Suspicious Activity

If you see suspicious behavior, do not confront the individuals involved.

Take note of the details:

S – Size (Jot down the number of people, gender, ages, and physical descriptions)

A - Activity (Describe exactly what they are doing)

L - Location (Provide exact location)

U – Uniform (Describe what they are wearing, including shoes)

T – Time (Provide date, time, and duration of activity)

E - Equipment (Describe vehicle, make, color etc., license plate, camera, guns, etc)

Suspicious activity is often recalled after an event. We must train ourselves to be on the lookout for things that are out of the ordinary and arouse suspicions.

The simplest measure you can take to protect yourself against crime is to incorporate certain habits into your daily routine that make you and your family less vulnerable, to adopt a "**security conscious**" lifestyle. The best prevention is precaution. Be cognizant of your surroundings and trust your instincts.