

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
SAFETY

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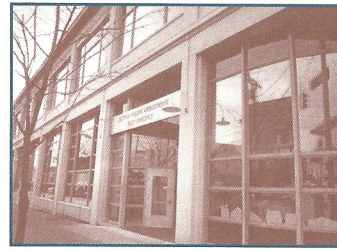
## OUR MISSION

*The Mission of the Seattle Police Department is to prevent crime, enforce the law and support quality public safety by delivering respectful, professional and dependable police services.*

## PRECINCT LOCATIONS



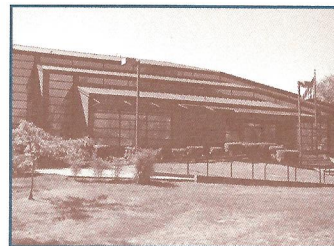
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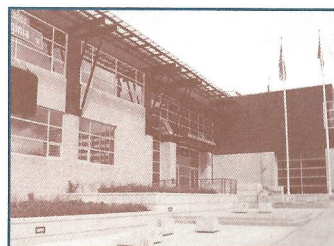
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Produced by the Seattle Police Department, 2004  
in collaboration with the Seattle Neighborhood Group



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the Seattle Neighborhood Group at (206) 323-9666



## CREATING SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhood Security encompasses a lot of different ideas and strategies. However, the unifying element is the need for neighbors to work both as individuals and as a coordinated team. In the following pages you will find information on a variety of topics that can help to make your neighborhood safer and more inviting.

### BROKEN WINDOW THEORY

'The Broken Window Theory' was made popular by the work of James Q. Wilson and George Kelling. The theory essentially maintains that there is a relationship between order/maintenance issues in geographic areas and the level of crime that occurs in the same area. They believe that if a neighborhood looks as though no one is caring for it, (i.e. there are abandoned cars, broken windows, people panhandling), then it becomes a magnet for increasing levels of anti-social behavior. The theory suggests that as the order/maintenance problems increase, law-abiding individuals become more fearful and retreat from the area. The fewer law-abiding people involved in the area, the more attractive it becomes to those inclined toward criminal behavior. Soon the balance of that area tips to favor the criminal element rather than law abiding citizens.

Neighborhoods that are cohesive and respond quickly to small changes in their environment have a reduced risk of larger crime problems developing. Some strategies that have been used successfully are:

- Prompt removal of abandoned vehicles.
- Fast clean up of illegally dumped items, litter and spilled garbage.
- Immediate paint out of graffiti (within 48 hours).
- Providing gathering spots for teens to gather so they don't "hang out" on the corner.
- Fresh paint on buildings.
- Keeping sidewalks and gutters clean.
- Continual maintenance of vacant properties.

## WORKING TOGETHER - BLOCK WATCH

In an era where many people spend their waking hours working and commuting, it is increasingly difficult to get to know your neighbors. A sense of community does not just happen anymore. We have to work at building it. Building a healthy community is well worth the effort; crime is lower in areas where residents engage with each other as neighbors. Safe, healthy neighborhoods provide many settings and ways for people to interact in positive ways with each other. One of the easiest and most effective ways to do this is through Block Watch.

Block Watch is a tool that helps build community and solve neighborhood crime and disorder problems. The success of this program is owed to the participation of citizens who have taken responsibility for making their neighborhoods safe and livable.

Each neighborhood will make their block watch program unique. Block Watch does not mean being the neighborhood "know it all". It also does not commit you to extra responsibilities. It means that you get to know the people who live around you, report suspicious activity to the police and work cooperatively with a number of people when problems arise in your neighborhood.

### BLOCK WATCH IS FOR EVERYONE!

Block Watch is not restricted to private homes. Apartment and condominium dwellers can also participate in the Block Watch program. Families on a block form a communication chain aided by a block map that lists names, telephone numbers and addresses of all those on the block. They watch out for each others' homes and report suspicious activities to the police and each other to reduce the likelihood of burglary and other crimes occurring on their street.

### FORMING A BLOCKWATCH

If you are interested in forming a Block Watch in your neighborhood you can contact your local precinct and talk with a Crime Prevention Coordinator. They can assist you by providing information on home security, protecting your belongings, and how to start and maintain a Block Watch.





## CPTED

### CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

The physical design of your neighborhood, its layout, lighting, building and maintenance, can effect the levels of crime and fear in your neighborhood. The “Broken Windows” theory, discussed on page 4, describes how the quick response to the small problems of broken windows, graffiti, trash, etc can stop the escalation toward bigger crime problems occurring. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or CPTED, takes this one step further. CPTED looks at the entire neighborhood to identify areas or elements that may have the potential to attract crime. Knowing simple CPTED design principals can lead to solutions that can be undertaken to reduce fear and prevent crime in these areas. CPTED can also help you plan ahead for future development in your neighborhood.

There is much information about CPTED available online if you want more details than this booklet can provide. There are some basic strategies however that you can incorporate into discussions with your neighborhood or Block Watch group for shared areas such as parks or alleys. There are also strategies you should consider for your personal property.

### NATURAL SURVEILLANCE:

CPTED does not promote the “fortressing” of properties, quite the contrary. The ability to see what is going on in and around a property should be your first priority. Perpetrators of crime are attracted to areas and residences with low visibility. This can be counteracted in the following ways:

- **Lighting** – street lights should be well spaced and in working order, alleys and parking areas should also be lit. Lighting should also reflect the intended hours of operation, i.e. lighting of playfields or structures in local parks may actually encourage after hour criminal activities. Motion-sensing lights perform the double duty of providing light when needed and letting trespasser know that “they have been seen.”
- **Landscaping** – Generally uniformly shaped sites are safer than irregularly shaped sites because there are less hiding places. Plants should follow the 3-8 rule of thumb; hedges no higher than 3 feet, and tree canopies starting no lower than 8 feet. This should be especially important around entryways and windows.
- **Fencing** – Fences should allow people to see in. Even if the fences are built for privacy, they should be of a design that is not too tall and has some visibility.
- **Windows** – Windows that look out on streets and alleys are good natural surveillance, especially bay windows. These should not be blocked. Retirees, stay at home parents, and people working from home offices can provide good surveillance for the neighborhood during the day.

### NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL:

Access Control refers to homes, businesses, parks and other public areas having distinct and legitimate points for entry and exits. However, this should also be balanced to avoid “user entrapment,” or not allowing for easy escape or police response to an area. Generally crime perpetrators will avoid areas that only allow them with one way to enter and exit, and that have high visibility and/or have a high volume of user traffic. This can be assured by:

- Park designs with open, uninhibited access and a defined entry point. A good example is a park with transparent fencing around the perimeter, and one large opening in the gate for entry. Putting vendors or shared public facilities near this entrance creates more traffic and more surveillance.
- Businesses with one legitimate entrance. Avoid recessed doorways.
- A natural inclination is to place public restrooms away from centers of activity, but they can become dangerous if placed in an uninhabited area. Restrooms that are down a long hallway, or foyer entrances with closed doors, are far away from the entrance of a park, or are not visible from the roadway can become problem areas.
- Personal residences with front and back doors that are clearly visible and well lit.

### TERRITORIALITY/DEFENSIBLE SPACE:

Much like the “Broken Window” theory advocates the quick attending to nuisance crimes to show that a neighborhood is valued, territoriality means showing that your community “owns” your neighborhood. While this includes removing graffiti and keeping buildings and yards maintained, it also refers to small personal touches. Creating flower gardens or boxes, putting out seasonal decorations, or maintaining the plants in traffic circles seems simple, but sends a clear message that people in your neighborhood care and won’t tolerate crime in their area. These kinds of personal touches work in business communities as well. More complex design efforts can also be undertaken for more dramatic changes. These are some things that should be considered when planning for future growth:

- Front porches and apartment balconies add to street surveillance.
- Traffic plans that consider the size of the neighborhood. People drive by “feel” more than speed limits, so a wide, two lane residential street can lead to speeding. Traffic circles, or increasing the size of curbs can help to calm traffic.
- Institutional architecture that respects the neighborhood identity and does not dwarf the current scale of the neighborhood.
- Clear transitions between private, semi-private and public areas.



## THERE IS POWER IN NEIGHBORS

If your neighborhood is having chronic problems with nuisances such as noise and speeding, or more serious problems with drug or gang activities, you are not powerless to change the situation. The immediate role of the police is to respond to individual situations, but when a situation is part of a recurring problem, the help of active neighbors help investigations and allow police to take further action.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Start a Block Watch** - An active Block Watch may be the most important tool you have to reclaim your neighborhood, or stop problems before they get too serious. Block Watch is a tool to inform your neighbors about an activity they may not have noticed and get them to observe and report it as well. Make sure you ask all new neighbors to join, as this sends a clear message that your neighborhood is alert and will report criminal activities.
- **Report Crime** - Don't assume that your neighbors have already reported the crime or that the police already know. Report criminal or suspicious activity each and every time it occurs. If the pattern changes, report that change. All neighbors affected by the drug activity are encouraged to report.
- **Keep a Log** - Keeping records of where, when, and what kind of activity occurred will help later if there is a criminal prosecution or need to establish a pattern of behavior. A log should be kept of behaviors that are suspicious in addition to those that are criminal. A log should include:
  1. An address of where the activity occurred.
  2. Date and time of activity
  3. Description of the problem: people, vehicles, and activities.
  4. Describe both what you see and hear.
  5. Incident or event numbers: if you report activity to 911, ask for an event number. If an officer comes out to take a report, ask for an incident number. Keep both of these numbers in your log.
  6. The actions have been taken by you or your neighbors. Take note of your responses to each activity. Note how the activities have directly affected your life: how do you feel emotionally in response to the activity? Have there been any significant lifestyle changes you or your neighbors have made due to the activity?

## RECOGNIZING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

One of the cornerstones of the Block Watch program is reporting suspicious activity to police. Pinpointing what precisely constitutes 'suspicious' behavior can be difficult, so it is important to distinguish between true illegal activity and activities of people who just live their lives differently than yours. The following are guidelines of what can be considered suspicious behavior:

### SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY INVOLVING LOCATIONS

- Continuous "Repair" operations at a non-business location.
- Open or broken windows at closed businesses or residences whose owners are temporarily absent.
- Unusual noises such as gunshots, screaming, unusually barking dogs, or any noise that is suggestive of foul play.
- Unusual odors coming from location.
- Continuous traffic that comes and goes to the same location, usually staying for very short periods of time.

### SUSPICIOUS SITUATIONS INVOLVING PROPERTY

- Property carried by persons on foot, especially questionable if the person is running. May be significant if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.
- Property being removed from or being placed into vehicles or buildings if removed from closed residences whose owners are known to be absent.
- Someone offering to sell you something for significantly less than the market value.
- Items that accumulate in private garages, storage areas, or on property especially if the items are in good condition but not in use.

### SUSPICIOUS SITUATIONS INVOLVING PEOPLE

- People going door-to-door in a residential area and one or more of the subjects going into a back or side yard. More suspicious if another person remains in front of the house when this occurs.
- Someone waiting in front of a house or business when the owners are absent, or if the business is closed.
- Someone forcing entrance to or tampering with a residence, business, vehicle, etc.
- A person running especially if something of value is being carried.



## ... RECOGNIZING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

### SUSPICIOUS SITUATIONS INVOLVING VEHICLES

- Slow moving vehicles, vehicles without lights, and/or the course followed appears aimless or repetitive. This is suspicious in any location, but particularly in areas of schools, parks, and playgrounds.
- Vehicles being loaded with valuables are suspicious if parked in front of a closed business or untended residence, even if the vehicle is a legitimate looking commercial unit – possibly even bearing a sign identifying it as a repair vehicle, moving van, etc.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- Persons attempting forcibly to enter a locked vehicle, especially at night or in a parking lot.
- Persons detaching mechanical parts or accessories from a vehicle especially at night or in a parking lot.
- Apparent business transactions conducted from a vehicle especially if around schools or parks, and if juveniles are involved.
- Persons being forced into vehicles, especially if juveniles or females.
- Objects thrown from a vehicle, especially while traveling at a high speed.

## RECOGNIZING DRUG ACTIVITY

### SIGNS OF DRUG ACTIVITY

Like all major cities, Seattle faces a growing battle against drugs. The police can't solve this problem alone, success requires community involvement. It is often hard to be certain that what you are seeing involves drugs, but some patterns may indicate drug activity:

- An unusually large amount of traffic coming to a building – in cars, taxis, or walking – often at strange hours. Visitors may sometimes pound on doors or shout to be let in. This traffic is usually quick, with people staying only a short time. Sometimes they don't go in at all; instead, someone comes out to meet them.
- Finding drugs or drug paraphernalia (syringes, pipes, etc.) in the area.
- Repeated, observable exchanges of items, especially where money is visible.
- Offers to sell you drugs, or conversation about drugs that you overhear.
- Noxious odors from, or around, the building, such as "musty" smells.
- Buildings where extreme security measures seem to be being taken.
- Buildings where no owner or primary renter is apparent, and no home activities, such as yard work, painting, or maintenance, seems to be going on.

## RECOGNIZING GANG ACTIVITY

Gang activity is a common concern for many neighborhoods. Understanding more about gangs and their activity will help address some of the root causes. First is understanding why young people are attracted to gangs. The most prevalent reason for joining gangs is the promise of wealth or recognition. Other strong motivations for joining a gang are the excitement of gang activity, peer pressure, attention, protection from other gangs or hostile individuals, a lack of realization of the hazards involved, and family tradition. Many gang members are seeking the recognition and acceptance that they do not receive at home or in school.

### HOW ARE GANGS IDENTIFIED?

Most gang members are proud of their gang affiliation and freely admit membership. They use and display signs of their affiliation openly.

- **Gang Names** - Gangs usually adopt a group name that relates to their neighborhood, street, or region.
- **Nickname** - Most gang members adopt a nickname or "street name". The name usually fits the physical characteristics or personality of the individual.
- **Dress** - Members wear gang symbols on clothing; use the emblem of a sports team; a certain brand or color of clothing and accessories; or wear clothing in a particular manner to indicate gang membership.
- **Graffiti** - Gang members use graffiti to mark their gang's "turf" or territory, to advertise the gang's status or power, and to declare their allegiance to the gang.

## REPORTING DRUG/GANG ACTIVITY

### Drug or Gang Activity in Progress:

For drug or gang activity that is in progress that needs an immediate police response, call 9-1-1. If you would like to speak to the responding officer about the situation, tell the 9-1-1 operator.

### On-going Drug or Gang Activity:

On-going drug or gang activity, which police need to be aware of, but doesn't require immediate response, call the police non-emergency number (206) 625-5011 or one of the five precincts. You can also make a direct report to Narcotics or Gang detectives. You may also want to consider keeping a log of activities, as detailed on page 8.

Note: You can report drug or gang activity anonymously, but it is more helpful if you give your name and phone number in case additional information is needed. You can ask that your name not be released to anyone.



## GRAFFITI

Graffiti is vandalism. Graffiti is created to be seen by others, so the best thing you can do if it appears on your property is to paint it out thoroughly and immediately. The best way to remove graffiti is to paint the entire wall (or up to seven feet high), making a straight line across the top with a color that matches the wall. This leaves no trace of graffiti and does not draw the attention of the vandals. If that is not possible, use a closely matched color blocked over the graffiti in neat, square shapes. To report graffiti on public property call the City of Seattle's Hotline at (206) 684-7587.

## NOISE PROBLEMS

SMC 25.08.505 states that property under one's possession cannot be knowingly used for a residential disturbance, as defined by SMC 25.08.225. As defined by the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), 25.08.500, it is unlawful to knowingly cause, make or allow unreasonable noise which disturbs another and to refuse or intentionally fail to cease when ordered to do so by a police officer. "Unreasonable Noise" includes loud, raucous, frequent, repetitive, or continuous sounds made by: animals, horns or sirens other than emergency equipment, motor vehicles being repaired, tested, etc., musical instruments or sound amplifiers, and human voices, amplified or unamplified, between the hours of 10 PM and 7 AM.

SMC 25.08.515 limits the sound from motor vehicle sound system or portable audio system to 75 feet from where it is originating. SMC 25.08.520 allows specific public officials the authority to terminate a public performance if the noise from that event is deemed a "nuisance" by violating the legal decibel limit. To report noise, call the Seattle Police non-emergency number (206) 625-5011.

## STREETLIGHTING

Streetlighting, combined with other types of neighborhood lighting, can make a big difference in how safe a neighborhood feels. If streetlights in your neighborhood need repair, please notify Seattle City Light. Call (206) 684-7056 with the pole number and the address of the closest building. You can also report problem streetlights online [www.seattle.gov/light/streetlight/](http://www.seattle.gov/light/streetlight/). To boost your neighborhood lighting in alleys or other dark areas, you can lease high-pressure sodium streetlights and floodlights for a minimum two-year period. These lights are installed on existing utility poles. Monthly charges include the cost of electricity, fixture maintenance, lamp replacement and scheduled pole maintenance. Installation charges also apply. For a cost estimate, please call (206) 615-0600 for locations north of Denny Way and (206) 386-4200 for locations south of Denny Way.

## SPEEDING

Speeding automobiles are one of Seattle residents' most commonly cited concerns. In residential neighborhoods, fast moving traffic can be noisy, endanger pedestrians and playing children, and can be very unpleasant for residents. Surprisingly, most speeding drivers are actually residents of the neighborhood in which they speed. Fortunately there are several City programs available to assist residents with speeding problems so that the solution can fit the neighborhood.

### SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

The first step you can take to help end speeding and traffic problems is to drive the way you would like others to drive in your neighborhood. By driving carefully and at proper speeds, you can make sure that you are not part of the problem, and set a good example. Your driving helps demonstrate to others what is and is not acceptable in your neighborhood.

### NEIGHBORHOOD SPEED WATCH

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) (206) 684-0817 will loan residents a radar unit at no cost. One person must be designated as the one responsible for the pick-up, care, and return of the equipment. The unit can be used by the block for a maximum of three days. Two people are usually required, one to clock speeds and another to fill out forms provided by SDOT. When they receive the complaint forms, a letter is sent to the registered owner informing him/her that the vehicle was seen speeding.

### TRAFFIC CIRCLES

Due to high demand and limited funding there is an evaluation process for each traffic circle request. Community support must be demonstrated with a petition signed by 60% of the households and businesses within the affected area. Next a Traffic Safety Analysis is done by SDOT (206) 684-0817, using collision history, speed studies, and volume counts for the site. All sites are ranked and assigned points on the basis of the analysis.

### TRAFFIC SIGNS & SIGNALS

Requests for traffic signs and signals usually result in much quicker response than those for a traffic circle. To have an intersection evaluated for a traffic sign or signal contact the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). For damaged, malfunctioning, repair or replacement of traffic signals, call (206) 386-1206.



## SAFEGUARDING YOUR RESIDENCE

Working together with your neighbors and applying CPTED (see page 6) principles of maintenance and lighting will heighten the security of your neighborhood and your home. There are also some additional security measures you can implement to protect your home from burglary and theft.

### GENERAL HOME SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

The first thing you should ask yourself about your home is "If I am locked out of my house, where could I get in without too much difficulty?" This should lead you to see potential problems with your current security. Please remember though, that while you do want to make it hard for a burglar to get in, you don't want it to be impossible for your household to get out in an emergency.

- **Exterior doors** - should be strong enough to withstand excessive force, be secured with a deadbolt lock that has a minimum one-inch throw, and all strike plates and frames should be anchored to the home's main construction. Frames should be free of warping, cracks and in good repair.
- **Peepholes** - should be on the main entrance door, and should have a doorwide-angle (180 degree) view.
- **Sliding glass doors** - and windows should be secure against forcing the locks or from being lifted completely out of the frame.
- **High-risk windows** - basement, garage, and ground level windows are important to remember and secure.
- **Double-hung windows** - should be secured with pins or extra locks to discourage prying.
- **House numbers** - should be posted on your house and be clearly visible from the street both night and day.

### LEAVING FOR VACATION

If you leave obvious signs that your house is unoccupied while you are on vacation, it can be an invitation for burglars. While you are gone, your neighbors are a great resource to watch your house. A trusted neighbor should be:

- Informed of your vacation plans; when you are leaving and expected return date.
- Left with a key to your home so that the position of curtains, and/or blinds can be changed.
- Asked to pick up the newspapers, mail, and to place it in the house.
- Inform neighbors on all four sides of when you'll be gone so that a complete look-out is maintained. Be selective, however, in announcing your plans to anyone else.
- It is a good idea to ask a neighbor to park a car in your driveway and to use your garbage container.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Experience shows that, prepared or not, neighbors naturally come together to help each other out when a disaster occurs. Unfortunately, unprepared neighborhoods are sometimes slower to respond because their first efforts are spent in getting organized. Being prepared allows neighborhoods to respond immediately in order to reduce the severity of injuries, lessen property damage, and possibly save lives.

The City of Seattle can help neighborhoods prepare for a disaster by helping them organize under the **Seattle Disaster and Preparedness Teams (SDART)** Program. The program helps neighbors to organize by taking advantage of the skills, resources, and equipment already in the neighborhood to assign immediate tasks for an effective response to a disaster.

Citizens in each neighborhood (defined as a group of about 25-50 homes) are organized into seven disaster response teams:

1. **Communications** - members of this team monitor emergency radio broadcasts and keep the neighborhood informed of relevant information, external to the neighborhood, about the disaster.
2. **Damage Assessment** - members of this team make a preliminary and then a detailed assessment of the damage the neighborhood has sustained.
3. **First Aid** - members of this team establish a Neighborhood First Aid Station to provide basic first aid during the disaster.
4. **Safety & Security** - this team provides safety to the neighborhood by immediately checking for fires and putting them out while they are still small, turning off the natural gas and water mains when necessary, roping off hazards such as downed electrical lines, and removing debris.
5. **Light Search & Rescue** - members of this team perform light searches of homes and rescues of neighbors who may be trapped in their homes. They also implement a neighborhood internal communication system.
6. **Sheltering & Special Needs** - this team establishes a child/adult care center for children whose parents may not be home when the disaster strikes, for the elderly or disabled, and for those whose family members are completing their disaster response tasks.

To find out more about the SDART program, or to set up a meeting in your neighborhood contact the **Emergency Preparedness Bureau** at (206) 233-5076.



# CALLING 9-1-1

## CALL EMERGENCY 9-1-1 WHEN:

- When you have a Police, Fire or Medical emergency.
- To report a crime that is in progress, or has just occurred.
- There is a situation that could, or does, pose a danger to life, property, or both.
- There is suspicious activity involving a Person(s), or Vehicle, that appears criminal in intent.

**Please Note:** Seattle Police 9-1-1 calltakers have immediate access to interpreters, who can assist them in communicating with callers, and TTY machines at every station. If you are outside the city and need to report an emergency that is occurring in the city limits call (206) 583-2111. 9-1-1 calls from pay phones are free.

## WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU CALL 9-1-1:

Remain patient and calm while the 9-1-1 calltaker asks you questions. 9-1-1 calltakers are trained to ask specific questions to quickly determine what is wrong, and what type of assistance to send. Please stay on the line until the calltaker tells you to hang up. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

**Where?** Where did this occur? Did it happen on the street, inside, outside, in front or in back, etc.?

**What?** What happened?

**When?** How long ago did this occur? Is the event still in progress?

**Weapons?** Are there any weapons? Are drugs, or alcohol involved?

Additional questions that might be asked are:

- How many people are involved, and what ages?
- Are they on foot or in a vehicle?
- Personal Descriptions: Race/Sex/Age/Build Clothing. Operators will generally ask for a clothing description from top to bottom, and outside to inside.
- Vehicle Descriptions: Color/Year/Make/Model/License Plate Number and State.

## THE SEATTLE POLICE NON EMERGENCY LINE:

**(206) 625-5011**

Reasons for calling the non-emergency number include, but are not limited to the following:

- You want to report a nuisance, such as a noise or parking complaint.
- To report a non-emergency crime, one that did not just occur, and the suspect(s) are not in the immediate area.
- You have questions about something suspicious occurring in your neighborhood, and you are not sure it is criminal activity.