

Suggestions for Creating “Neighborhood Awareness”

Do

- ❖ Call the Athens Police Department 24hrs a day, 7 days a week--anytime you see something suspicious. The **non-emergency** phone number is **740-593-6606**. For an actual emergency, always dial 911. Our officers can't be everywhere, so it is helpful for them to be directed to situations that occur out of police sight. Without putting yourself in danger, get as much information as possible before phoning in a complaint. (See “**How-to** tips” below for reporting information to police. **)
- ❖ Call APD if you discover you've been a victim of crime, or if you witness what you believe may be criminal activity, even if you think it is trivial or that the police won't be able to solve your crime. By your reporting it, the police now have it on record. This helps us better recognize the true scale of crime in our community and allows us to alert neighborhoods to be on the lookout for any further illegal activity in the area.
- ❖ Talk with your neighbors about what is happening in your neighborhood. Staying well-informed and up-to-date helps residents recognize unusual or illegal activity when it occurs.
- ❖ Recognize that when you call the Athens Police Department, your complaint may not be the only phone call or situation being handled at that particular moment. Please have reasonable expectations about response time and please be patient. If your call isn't dealt with as you expected, it doesn't mean that is how APD generally responds to complaints. By all means, keep calling with your concerns. The non-emergency number to the APD is **740-593-6606**. **After your initial call and prior to our response, if something should happen that escalates the situation, please call again and update us.**
- ❖ In ANY emergency, DO NOT HESITATE to dial 911.

Don't

- ✓ Don't angrily confront neighbors about noise or other issues that could escalate into an argument or altercation. A better way is to file a complaint

with the Athens Police Department and allow us to be your representative in seeking relief.

✓ Don't call about specific minor traffic violations, e.g., you saw a car run a red light or a stop sign. By law, officers must witness a traffic violation before action can be taken. On the other hand, Driving Under the Influence of alcohol or drugs is not a "minor" traffic violation--**DO** call in suspected DUI violations or after witnessing what appears to be a pattern of violations at a particular location (e.g. a lot of people running the same stop sign over and over again).

✓ Please understand that an APD response to a complaint may be different from what you expected. We do our best to prioritize complaints and to respond appropriately, but during any shift we often are dealing with multiple concerns or emergencies. The response to your call at a particularly busy moment doesn't mean we handle all such complaints in the same way. We are also bound not only by the written law but by the court's interpretation of that law (case law). There are times when case law requires different police action than what is expected from our community. If you have questions or concerns, you may always contact the on-duty shift supervisor. Please call 740-592-3313, at any time, day or night, but in case of an emergency, always dial 911!

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**** *How-to TIPS for reporting information to police***

Describing people

- Height--Most people can't accurately judge height without some reference. Try to find something nearby to compare the person to and relay that information to us.
- Weight-- General descriptions are best. The person was heavy, thin, muscular, fit, out of shape, etc.
- Hair color is important, but so is length and style. General descriptions include "above the ears," "over the ears," "neck length" (bottom of the neck), "shoulder length" (past the neck), curly, straight, wavy, etc.

- Clothing--Try to find something specific to reference. For instance, the red flannel shirt had a torn pocket, the white t-shirt had some kind of stain on the front. Logos such as sports teams, brand names etc. are all very helpful.
- Shoes-- Most witnesses don't take time to look at shoes, but it can be the most helpful of all personal descriptions. Criminals often change their clothes, but not their shoes. Shoes leave specific foot prints that can place people at crime scenes. We need type and brand if possible (e.g. White Nike Tennis Shoes with a blue "swoosh", brown lug sole lace up work boots etc.)
- Direction of travel and/or last known location, and specific time or time frame when last seen (e.g., 15 minutes ago).

Describing vehicles

- Color-- Consider shade as well as intensity, e.g., there is a big difference between a dark green and a light green car. If you can't discern the shade, don't guess the color, just focus on intensity: e.g., the car was dark colored.
- Style-- Was it a 2- or a 4-door car? Was it a sedan or a hatch back (trunk isolated from the cabin of the car)? Was it a full-size pickup or a small pickup?
- General appearance--Was the car clean, or dirty, e.g., muddy, dusty, etc. Was there anything that stood out? Was there a dent in the fender, a bumper sticker, chrome wheels, a missing hub cap, etc.
- License Number--An entire license number is very helpful, but partial plate numbers will help, too.
- Make and Model--If you can ascertain it, this information allows us to narrow our focus.
- Direction of travel and/or last known location and Specific time or time frame last seen (e.g. 15 minutes ago).

COMMON COMPLAINTS THAT SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

- ❖ **OPEN BURNING-** Report backyard fires that are not contained in a grill (or a fire pit) with a mesh cover, or outdoor fireplace. Any fire without some type of cover over the top is probably in violation and even some fires that have such covers may be in violation depending on what is being burned so when in doubt please call 740-593-6606 so we can check it out.
- ❖ **GRAFFITI-** Call about fresh or new graffiti when you see it, especially if it is on public property. This crime often goes unreported, but knowing the whereabouts of graffiti activity helps APD identify targeted geographic areas to better focus our patrol patterns and apprehend vandals.
- ❖ **NOISE-** Remember that excessive and/or disruptive noise may be reported at ANY time, day or night, though police response will vary depending on time of day. Electronic noise audible at a distance of 50 feet or more from the source after 10pm on weekdays and midnight on the weekends is expressly forbidden.
- ❖ **PARKING-** You may report parking complaints (blocking sidewalks, yellow curb, restricted parking by signs, etc.) to the parking division (592-3308) by day, and to APD (593-6606) by night. Front yard parking is typically enforced by Code Enforcement, but after hours, we *may* be able to address the complaint. It never hurts to call, if we cannot handle the complaint, we will certainly report it to Code the next day.
- ❖ **TRAFFIC-** Report general observations about traffic violations, e.g., “I’ve seen several people ignore this stop sign,” “a lot of people speed on that

street,” “drivers are ignoring pedestrians at this red light,” etc., to keep the police department informed of problem areas or intersections.

- ❖ UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS SITUATIONS- The police, as the 24hr front-line of city government, act as first responders to all kinds of situations that aren't inherently law enforcement related. Examples could be water line leaks, downed power lines, natural gas leaks, hazardous materials spills, etc. Upon our arrival, we will assess the situation and if need-be notify the appropriate agency to respond.

See the City website for further information: www.ci.athens.oh.us. For Police, Fire, and Parking regulations, click on City Services. For Code of Ordinances, click on Government.