



Stafford County

# WORSHIP WATCH

Crime Prevention Guide

*Stafford County: A Certified Business Community*



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**Sheriff David P. Decatur, Jr.**  
**Stafford County Sheriff's Office**  
A State Accredited Law Enforcement Agency



Dear Community Partner,

The Stafford County Sheriff's Office is actively reaching out to places of worship so that together we can fight crime and help you and your members feel safe.

We are a progressive and professional Sheriff's Office. Our number one priority is crime prevention, but we cannot accomplish the job alone.

This manual is intended to assist you in reducing crime and to give you guidance should a crime happen to you or your members.

It is in no way intended to dictate what your policies should be. However, we hope that the information contained in this manual will be of use to you in your effort to put crime prevention to work for you.

Sincerely,

David P. Decatur, Jr.  
Sheriff

1225 Courthouse Road  
Stafford, VA 22554

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 189  
Stafford, VA 22555-0189

Office: (540) 658-4450  
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[www.co.stafford.va.us/sheriff](http://www.co.stafford.va.us/sheriff)

# Worship Watch-Crime Prevention Guide

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# GENERAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

*Although security is seldom the primary purpose of a place of worship, it is essential to keeping those worshipping safe. Regardless of the size or number of those worshipping each establishment needs someone to assume the responsibility and authority for safety and security. The designee should understand the importance of security and the need to apply proven management principles to assure that it is successful.*



# CRIME FOLLOWS THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

THE CRIME RISK TRIANGLE illustrates the three basic elements necessary for a crime to occur. It takes a criminal with the **DESIRE** and the **ABILITY** to commit a crime, and a victim who provides the **OPPORTUNITY** for the criminal act:

## Crime Prevention Triangle

**“The anticipation, recognition, and appraisal of a crime risk and the initiation of some action to remove or reduce it.”**



Crimes against persons, businesses or houses of worship are crimes of opportunity. If you minimize opportunity, which is the easier of the three elements to control, then you will minimize your losses due to crime. On the other hand, ***IF YOU MAKE IT EASY TO STEAL FROM YOU, SOMEONE WILL DO SO. DON'T MAKE IT EASY; MAKE IT DIFFICULT, RISKY AND UNREWARDING.***

Criminal activity tends to occur against “softer,” easier targets where the potential for gain is greater and the risk of apprehension is smaller.



# PRINCIPLES OF SECURITY MANAGEMENT

- Know your house of worship and recognize its vulnerability.
- Keep accurate records so that, in the event of a crime, you know what your actual losses are.
- Set controls and enforce them to minimize activity.
- Weigh the cost of each security measure against its potential for loss reduction savings.
- Thoroughly train security staff so they are confident and can fulfill what is expected of them.
- Disclose sensitive information to your security staff on a “need-to-know” basis only. Make sure staff follows the same policy so that sensitive information does not fall into the wrong hands.
- Post emergency numbers and security procedures in a safe, but easily accessible, place for quick reference by staff during business hours.
- Insist that staff **report all suspicious activity immediately.**
- Encourage staff to identify any criminal opportunity they may encounter in the house of worship.
- The obvious presence of a good security program will go a long way toward deterring criminal attempts.
- Encourage staff and members of your house of worship to become involved in Neighborhood Watch, Business Watch and other community crime prevention programs. Provide them with information which will help them reduce the opportunity for crime at home, in the community, while traveling, and at the workplace.



# PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

## A. MORNING:

1. Drive around building and look for signs of intrusion.
2. Lock doors behind you and leave them locked until others arrive.
3. Instruct all staff to enter via the front door.
4. Only open and count money in a closed office; never in front of staff or members of your house of worship.
5. **Always** keep the safe locked.
6. Secure your house of worship before leaving for any reason.
7. Make deposit at different times, vary routes and never stop for any reason. Go in pairs.

## B. DURING SERVICE:

1. **Always** keep the safe locked and secure it to the wall or floor.
2. Keep all non-public doors locked and supervised at **all** times.
3. Keep all store room doors locked when not in use.

## C. EVENING & CLOSING:

1. Do not allow trash to be taken out after dark.
2. Lock all doors at closing.
3. Walk entire house of worship looking for anyone who might be hiding. (This includes restroom stalls.)
4. Do not allow anyone in the building after closing.
5. Lock all funds in safe. If possible, deposit money in the bank and do not leave on site.
6. Interior security lights should be left on so Deputies may observe inside of building.
7. Double-check to ensure building is secure and empty.
8. Ensure that all alarm systems are in operation prior to departing.

## **D. KEYS:**

1. Strictly limit the number of keys out to members of your house of worship.
2. Change or re-key the following whenever a key carrier is no longer holding that position:
  - a. Safe combination.
  - b. Security key-pad combination.
  - c. Office door.
  - d. Storage and merchandise rooms.
  - e. Electronic Specialist's room.
  - f. Computer and compressor rooms.
  - g. Outside doors.

## **E. ALARM SYSTEMS:**

1. The basic needs are:
  - a. Exterior protection for doors and windows.
  - b. Interior motion or infrared detection.
  - c. Safe alarm.
  - d. Consider motion-sensor cameras.
2. The system is only as good as you make it. Proper training and staff awareness are essential. Dual technology sensors are recommended to prevent false alarms.

## **F. SECURITY GUARD:**

1. Duties
  - a. To aid in security measures during peak periods.
  - b. To be a visible deterrent to violence.
  - c. To patrol the parking lot periodically to minimize violence there.
  - d. To serve as support to management in enforcement of policies and procedures.
2. Relationships
  - a. Security guard reports directly to the General Manager.
  - b. Guests are to be treated with tact and courtesy at all times.
  - c. Security guard is to monitor assigned areas without intimidating those attending or doing business within your house of worship.

## **SUMMARY**

An effective security program not only protects your house of worship assets, the most important of which are people, but maintains the atmosphere so critical to the success of what the house of worship is designed to provide. Security is a never-ending job which helps deter small problems before they develop into major incidents.

# Getting Started With Worship Watch

*Working together to create a safer worship experience.*

Common Crimes targeting houses of worship include burglary, vandalism, arson and acts of violence. It is the responsibility of all members of the congregation, the Sheriff's Office and surrounding community to work together to deter these crimes. This goal can be accomplished by enhancing security at the House of Worship and by observing and reporting suspicious activity.

Worship Watch is a proactive program. The program is intended to encourage Houses of Worship to become more involved in reducing the opportunity for crimes to occur on their premises. The congregation and community residents will be more aware and quick to report any suspicious activity.

The objectives of Worship Watch are to:

- Increase awareness of neighborhood, business, and crime focused at houses of worship through an information sharing process.
- Train staff/members in making their house of worship more secure.
- Develop an action program where staff/members remain alert and aware of their surroundings and report suspicious persons, activities and crimes to the Stafford County Sheriff's Office.

By becoming a member of Stafford County's Worship Watch you receive the following benefits:

- Create a greater awareness of crime and crime prevention techniques.
- Crime prevention training.
- Provides a contact within the Sheriff's Office.
- Free security assessment.
- Receive crime alerts and other crime prevention information.
- Results in a safer community.

# BURGLARY

*On the average, approximately 17,000 non-residential burglaries occur in Virginia annually, resulting in the theft of over \$1 million in property and cash. Many of these offenses could have been prevented if consideration had been given to the risk and the appropriate application of physical security. Remember, your house of worship is not secure unless it is totally protected. The strongest door will do no good if the intruder can enter through an unlocked window. One national study indicated that 40% of all burglaries occurred through unlocked windows and doors.*

## **PREVENTION**

### **Fences and Gates:**

- If dictated by your analysis of risk, the entire perimeter of the property should be fenced. When not in use, gates should be secured with good padlocks and chains. In some instances, barbed wire toppings are necessary.
- Privacy fences and other opaque barriers should be avoided. For aesthetics, the best combination may be a wire fence lined with shrubs that are not allowed to grow above 36" in height.

### **Parking Areas and Open Spaces:**

- Post warning signs encouraging staff and members to lock their vehicles and place valuables in the trunk.
- Deny access to the roof by securing ladders, pallets, boxes, and crates away from the building.

### **Exterior Lighting:**

- Illuminate your property. Do not depend on nearby municipal lighting.
- Inspect lighting to ensure that it provides adequate visibility for the protection of customers and employees.
- Make sure that lighting does not cause glare to customers, employees or passing Sheriff's Office patrols. This can be accomplished by using cutoff lighting fixtures.

### **Doors:**

- Panels and glass should be protected against being kicked in or knocked out. You can use window coatings or lexan panels.
- Install metal lining on exterior wooden doors to resist drilling or sawing.
- Secure double doors with heavy duty, multiple-point, long flush bolts. Make sure the frame is as strong as the door.
- All exterior doors should be constructed of steel, aluminum alloy, or solid-core hardwood, with minimum 16 gauge steel on side and rear doors. Glass doors should have burglar-resistant glass installed.

### **Locks and Hardware:**

- Exterior swing doors should have a minimum one-inch dead bolt lock, one-inch throw bolt with a hardened insert, and free turning steel or brass tapered-cylinder guard. Steel strike plates should be used on aluminum doorframes. All outside hinges should have non-removable hinge pins.

### **Padlocks**

- The most common assaults on padlocks are made with bolt cutters or pry bars. Quality padlocks should have the following features: laminated or solid body case, hardened steel shackle with a minimum diameter of 9/32", a double locking mechanism providing "heel and toe" locking, and at least 5 pin tumblers in the cylinder.

### **Windows:**

- Windows should offer light, ventilation, and visibility, but not easy access. Locks should be designed so they cannot be reached and opened by breaking the glass.
- First floor windows should be protected with burglar-resistant glass, bars, grilles, grates, or heavy-duty wire screening to provide optimum window security.

### **Security Room:**

- Many houses of worship have or need a security room to provide extra protection for valuable assets. If your house of worship has such a requirement, the room should contain a door constructed of metal, with a minimum one-inch dead bolt lock. The number of personnel having access should be limited.

### **Safes:**

- Standing safes should be well illuminated and visible from outside the building. They should be anchored to the floor. Cash amounts should be kept at a minimum by frequent banking. Never leave the combination written where it can be found.
- Keep a complete list of serial numbers of all equipment. When completed lock the list in the safe and update it as needed. Keep a copy of this list at another safe location.

### **Tools and Equipment:**

- Unsecured tools or equipment may be stolen or used by a thief on your doors, safes, security room, cabinets and so on.
- Tools and portable equipment should be secured in locked drawers or cabinets at the close of the business day.

### **Interior Lighting:**

- Keep the interior of the facility well lighted. Burglars prefer darkened areas. Leave your blinds and drapes open and install locks on outside fuse boxes.

### **Alarms and Security Systems:**

- Alarms can provide added protection to your house of worship. Installation of an alarm does not mean that other security measures are not necessary.
- There are two basic types of intruder detection systems: Audible and silent. The audible alarm typically sounds on the building while the silent alarm is monitored by a central station which notifies the Sheriff's Office when the signal is activated.
- Alarm systems should contain a back-up, fail safe system, a fire sensing capability, and a testing feature.

### **Key Control:**

- Key control is an absolute necessity in all houses of worship. Master keys, safe keys, and others should be secured. A procedure should be established for issuing master or sensitive keys to employees on an as needed basis.

## **BURGLARY PROCEDURES**

The following suggestions are offered in the event of a burglary to your house of worship:

- Provide the Sheriff's Office with the names and telephone numbers of staff/members that should be called if a burglary occurs. The designated staff/member respond to the burglary and assume responsibility for securing the building and assisting the Sheriff's Office in determining what has been stolen.
- If you discover a burglary and believe there is a chance the burglar may be inside, do not enter. Go elsewhere and call the Sheriff's Office.
- Upon discovering a burglary, leave the scene intact until Deputies arrive. Do not touch or disturb anything.
- Do not open the facility until the Sheriff's Office has completed the investigation. Evidence may be destroyed if people begin to enter the establishment.
- Be prepared to furnish Deputies with a list of stolen property, its description, serial numbers, and value.

# VANDALISM

Annual damage estimates due to vandalism are in the billions. Most vandals are young people from grade school to teens to young adults.

1. Contact the Sheriff's Office to report vandalism. The deputy will want to photograph the vandalism to ensure no gang activity is related.
2. Clean up vandalism as soon as it has been reported and documented and no longer than 24-48 hours - replace signs; repair equipment; paint over graffiti. Then, use landscape designs, building materials, lighting or fence to discourage vandals. Manicuring shrubs, closely-planted hedges and hard-to-mark surfaces can be effective in many circumstances.
3. Protect the facility by installing and using good lighting and locks.

Graffiti is a crime. If not removed to show ownership, it will attract more illicit behavior. Should your facility be a victim, follow these removal tips and helpful resources:

## Graffiti is a crime

Graffiti in a community has negative effects:

- It is vandalism
- It lowers property values
- It may invite other illegal activity
- It is offensive, unsightly, and destructive
- It is often used by vandals to gain recognition
- It often instills fear

## Respond Quickly

Your immediate response to graffiti on your property should be to remove it promptly:

- Removal within 24-48 hours may prevent future vandalism
- Quick action discourages vandals further targeting your business
- Quick removal helps restore the beauty of your business
- Local power-washing service companies often offer discounts for graffiti removal

## Prevention

These steps may help prevent graffiti in your area:

- Install exterior lighting or motion detection lights
- Select textured or paint resistant surfaces
- Contact Stafford County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit (540-658-4030) to be part of Business Watch
- Report suspicious activity
- Add plants and landscaping to act as a natural barrier for graffiti vandals

# ACTS OF VIOLENCE

## HOW TO RESPOND

When an active shooter is in your vicinity:

1. Evacuate
  - Have an escape route and plan in mind.
  - Leave your belongings behind.
  - Keep your hands visible.
2. Hide Out
  - Hide in an area out of the shooter's view.
  - Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors.
  - Silence your cell phone and/or pager.
3. Take Action
  - As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger.
  - Attempt to incapacitate the shooter.
  - Act with physical aggression and throw items at the active shooter.

Stafford County Sheriff's Office

David P. Decatur, Sheriff



Active Shooter Response Guide

When law enforcement arrives:

1. Remain calm and follow instructions.
2. Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets).
3. Raise hands and spread fingers.
4. Keep hands visible at all times.
5. Avoid quick movements towards officers such as holding on to them for safety.
6. Avoid pointing, screaming, or yelling.
7. Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating.



Call 9-1-1 when it is safe to do so.

Information you should provide to law enforcement or 9-1-1 operator:

1. Location of the active shooter.
2. Number of shooters.
3. Physical description of shooters.
4. Number and type of weapons held by shooters.
5. Number of potential victims at the site.

Coping with an active shooter situation:

1. Be aware of your environment and any possible dangers.
2. Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility you visit.
3. If you are in an office, stay there and secure the door.
4. Attempt to take the active shooter down as a last resort.

Profile of an active shooter:

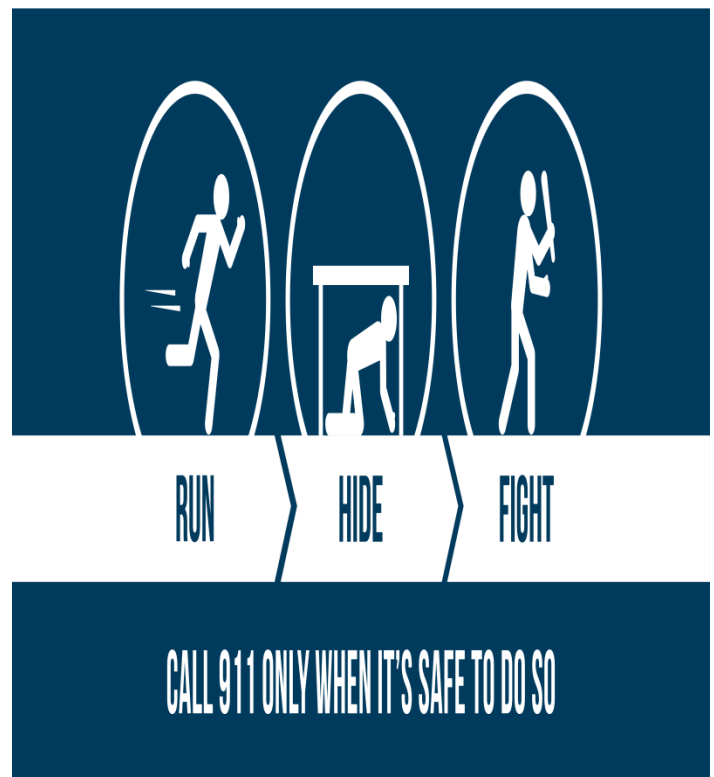
An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area, typically through the use of firearms.

Characteristics of an active shooter situation:

1. Victims are selected at random.
2. The event is unpredictable and evolves quickly.
3. Law enforcement is usually required to end an active shooter situation.

## ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE

LEARN HOW TO SURVIVE A SHOOTING EVENT



# Recognizing Suspicious Activity

**Slow moving vehicle without lights on at night:**

May be casing the neighborhood or tracking a victim.

**A parked, occupied vehicle unusual to the neighborhood:**

May be casing the neighborhood, operating as a point for drug dealing, a sexual deviate or child molester waiting for their target, being a get-away car.

**Vehicle being loaded with valuables if parked by closed business or unoccupied house:**

Possible burglary in progress.

**An unattended vehicle with the motor on:**

May be someone is, or has, committed a burglary or robbery.

**Leaving a location at night and has their lights off:**

Possible robber, assault violation or burglar.

**Problems driving their vehicle, especially if it is an expensive model:**

Possible stolen vehicle or the driver is driving under the influence or drug impaired.

**The vehicle is abandoned or in a bad condition, with signs of being in an accident:**

Could be involved in drive-by shooting or a hit and run accident.

**An overloaded vehicle that is heavily weighted down, parked, or traveling in your neighborhood:**

Possible burglar.

**Persons detaching mechanical parts or accessories from vehicle:**

Possible theft or vandalism in progress.

**Abandoned vehicle parked on block:**

Possible stolen vehicle.

**Someone being forced into a vehicle:**

Possible kidnapping, assault or attempted rape.

# Recognizing Suspicious Activity Through Sounds

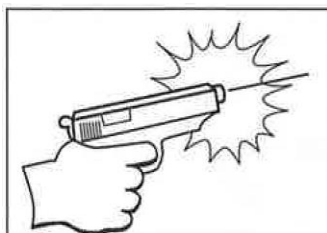
Your senses to detect suspicious activities are very helpful in combatting crime. Sounds may only last a few seconds and may go undetected. Here are some sounds which require close attention, and reporting:



**CRIES FOR HELP:** Screaming for help is precisely what you hear. Act on it find out where the screams are coming from and immediately call the Sheriff's Office. Heroes can be wounded or killed. Remember that apprehension is the job of the Sheriff's Office.

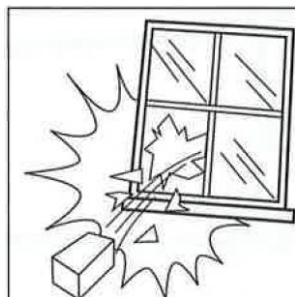
**CONTINUOUS SCREAMING:** This type of screaming probably is a result of someone being hurt or mistreated. Especially listen for victims cries. Quickly try to determine the location, source and nature of the scream and immediately call the Sheriff's Office.

**SCREAMING AND CURSING:** This type of screaming is probably a domestic violence incident between husband and wife, parent and child, two people who are intent on hurting each other but not in a life-threatening way. Determine the location, source and nature of the scream and call the Sheriff's Office.

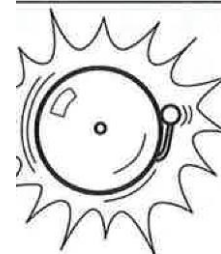


**GUNFIRE:** Immediately call the police or sheriff. Provide as much information as to the number of shots and their source (location) Important to note if there are multiple shooters and/or automatic weapons involved.

**ALARMS ACTIVATED:** Determine the location, source and nature of the alarm and call the Sheriff's Office.



**BREAKING GLASS:** If you hear the sound of breaking glass, immediately call the Sheriff's Office. This can mean someone is breaking into a dwelling or store.



**UNUSUAL SOUNDS:** If you hear some unusual sounds, you should determine the location, source and nature of the sounds, and if you are suspicious, immediately call the Sheriff's Office.

# Direction and Locations

In order to give the Sheriff's Office an accurate report of a crime or suspicious activity, you must be able to give an accurate description of the location. The description includes the direction; north, south, east or west. If you have trouble with directions, always remember the sun sets in the west. Just like in the cowboy movies. If you are facing west, east is behind you, north is to your right and south to your left. The sun and moon rise in the east, set in the west. Maps will almost always be oriented with north at the top of the map.

Learn the directions in which your streets travel, north and south, east and west, perhaps even northwest and southeast. It is important to know directions for reporting information.

A location description is best given by:

1. What is happening.
2. When did it happen.
3. Using the specific address.
4. Where at the location the incident is occurring.
5. How is it happening.

Examples:

- *"Two men just came running out of the side door of McDonald's at 123 So. Main and are heading east on Second Street in a tan Toyota pick-up truck."*
- *"I am hearing screams coming from a second floor apartment in the rear of 2842 So. Chesapeake."*
- *"Something suspicious, may be drugs, is happening on the south east corner of Vincent and 23rd."*

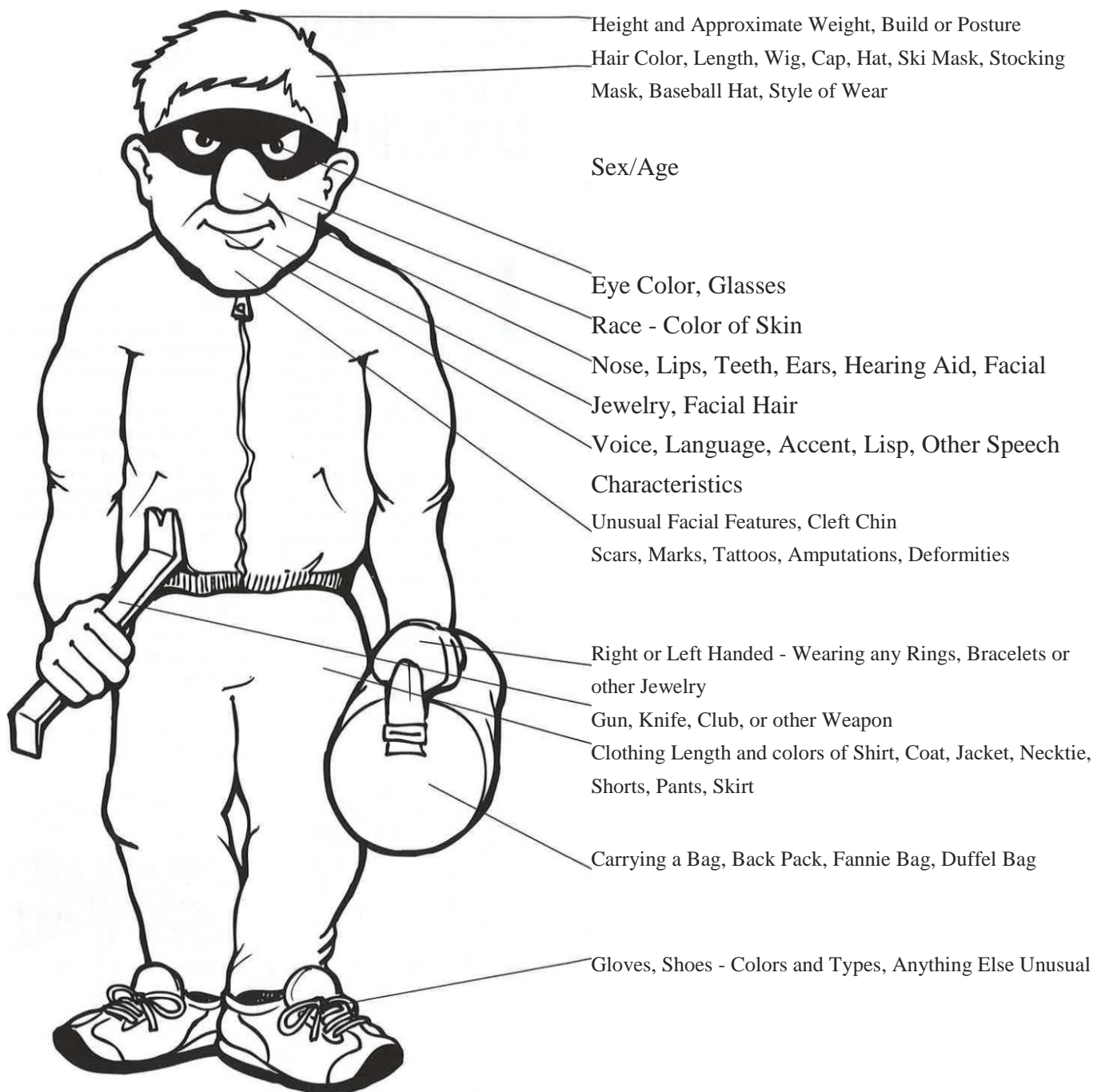
**BE SPECIFIC** with your information, give the exact location, the best possible description of the suspects and their vehicle.

- **WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHO, HOW AND WHY**

is what the Sheriff's Office needs to know, preferably in this order.

# Suspect Identification

Participants must be able to describe a person or suspect. In identifying a suspect, work from top to bottom of their body. The most important identification features are sex, height, weight, race, physical impairments, tattoos, scars and approximate age. These are the least likely to be altered by the suspect.



# Vehicle Details

## KIND OF VEHICLE

- Car - 2 door, 4 door, sports car, convertible.
- Recreation or Sport Utility Vehicle.
- Camper - style, on the back of a pick-up.
- Van - station wagon, windowed or solid sides.
- Truck - Small pick up, Large pick up, flat bed, stake truck, boxed cargo truck.
- Motorcycle - small or large, side car, domestic or foreign, street, dirt.

## COLORS

- Single color - two colors.
- Color and shade of that color (Blue - Midnight blue, powder blue, aqua blue).
- Window tinting - rear and/or side windows, color of tint.

## MAKE & MODEL

- Make: Ford, Chevrolet, Mercury, Buick, Plymouth, Chrysler, Dodge, Honda, Nissan, Kia, Volvo, Mercedes, Toyota, etc?
- Model: Maxima, Mustang, Camero, Thunderbird, Taurus, Camry, Civic, Accord, 350Z, Explorer, etc?

## YEAR

- If you know the year, great. If you don't, guess on how old you think it is, several years old, really a wreck?

## ADDITIONAL THINGS

- Any identifying bumper stickers, dents, bullet holes, broken windows?
- Was it lowered or raised from the standard production model?
- Was it damaged in any way? Bullet holes? Been in a crash?
- Hub caps missing, chrome wheels?

## LICENSE PLATES

**KNOW** the license plate number of any vehicle that is suspicious; include state and license plate colors.

**RECORD IT** quickly and exactly as you see it.

**REPORT** your suspicion to the Sheriff's Office quickly so they can pursue and apprehend someone involved in possible criminal activity.

# Reporting a Crime

If you know a crime is happening, or suspect that something suspicious or dangerous is going on, or even if potential trouble exists, do the following:

- Make an assumption if it is an **EMERGENCY**.
- An emergency requires **IMMEDIATE SHERIFF, FIRE AND/OR RESCUE RESPONSE**.
- If the situation is **ROUTINE**, then do not tie up the emergency lines. Call the Non-Emergency Number 540-658-4400.
- Unsure? Call 911.

**WHAT, WHEN, WHERE AND WHO** are the first four things you need to know to report a crime. **HOW AND WHY** are very important, but many times you don't know these answers.

When calling, here is what to provide, and what you may be asked:

- **FIRST** You will be asked what is your emergency? Sheriff, Fire or Medical?
- What is your location, your name and phone number? Are you in any danger?
- **WHAT** is happening. Try to be as calm and specific as possible.
- **WHAT** is needed. Sheriff? Fire Department? Paramedic?
- **WHEN** is it happening. Is it now? How long ago did it occur?
- **WHERE** is it happening? Give the specific address and directions.
- **WHO** is involved? Quick descriptions of the victims and the perpetrators need to be communicated.

Then **WAIT** for the operator's questions. Be as specific and factual as possible in answering them. Follow any instructions given to you. If you have to generalize about an answer, then specify that to the operator. Know the location you are calling from. Cooperate fully with the operator and the follow-up personnel who may contact you.

The same series of questions need to be answered when you are calling in a routine situation. A routine situation is one in which immediate response is not necessary, but does require sheriff attention. A stolen battery, stereo or cellular phone in your car does require attention, but not immediate response.



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# When Should I Call The Sheriff?

*While this manual was intended to educate business owners in the prevention of crime, there is no guarantee that you won't become a victim of crime.*

*If you are a victim of crime, witness a crime or observe any suspicious activity, you should contact the Sheriff's Office immediately.*

**NON-EMERGENCY**

**(540) 658-4400**


**FOR EMERGENCIES**

**DIAL 9-1-1**

**Sheriff's Office Administration** (540) 658-4450

**Stafford County Sheriff's Office**  
**Crime Prevention** (540) 658-4030

*[www.staffordsheriff.com](http://www.staffordsheriff.com)*



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