

How To Be a Good Witness by Constable Anne Longley

Have you ever witnessed something suspicious and wondered whether you should call the police? Many people are unsure when to call 911, when to call the non-emergency number, or whether to report it at all. Whatever the incident, the police and E-Comm staff are available 24-7, 365 days a year.

The 911 number is for police, fire or medical emergencies when immediate action is required, such as if life or property are in danger or if a crime is in progress. An in-progress crime can include fights & assaults, anything where a suspect is still at the scene, a report of an impaired driver, or a serious crime that has just happened even if the suspect has fled.

The non-emergency line is for situations where an immediate response of the police is not required. This includes things like reporting a crime with no suspect or with a time delay, as well as ongoing crime issues that are not in progress and noise complaints. If you are unsure how serious an incident is, call 911 and the call-taker will advise you whether you should be reporting it through the non-emergency number instead.

There's nothing more satisfying for the police than to catch a criminal in the act due to an alert person calling 911 and giving a great description of the situation and suspect. When your call is answered you will be asked specific questions in a priority sequence. Be prepared to answer questions relating to the five Ws: Where is this taking place? What is happening and is it happening now? How many are involved and are there any weapons? Who is involved – and what are their descriptions? Height, build, racial origin, hair colour, clothing colour and style, as well as any unique features, all help the police to identify the correct suspect(s). The same goes for vehicles, and getting the license plate and make, model and colour of the car assists us greatly. Stay on the phone with the call-taker until they advise you to hang up, and then wait for the police to come and see you. Write some notes down of what you saw while it's still fresh in your mind.

Although it's tempting at times to jump in and get involved if you see something going on, we always advise people to consider their safety first, and to call 911 immediately to alert the police. Being a good witness, while remaining safe and calm, is often the best assistance you can give us.

If an incident occurs at your work site, you must also notify your Security Department *after* the police have been called.

Vancouver Police Department Non Emergency #
E-Comm website for more information

604-717-3321
www.ecomm911.ca

