

How to describe suspects, vehicles & activities

When you call to report criminal activity, how you describe what you observe is very important. Your information will allow any responding officer(s) to assess the situation and respond appropriately.

Describing suspects

Take note of gender, race, age, height, weight, hair, scars, tattoos, glasses, facial hair, clothing and anything else that would help police find the person. If you don't have time to note all of these, pay attention to the things the suspect cannot change. Also note the direction the suspect is headed.

Describing vehicles

Take note of the license plate and the direction the vehicle is travelling. Then note color, make, year, body style and any other characteristics such as dents or bumper stickers.

Describing activities

Give as much detail as you can about why this person and their behavior are suspicious to you and not typical for your neighborhood. This will assist the call taker in prioritizing the officer response to your call.

When NOT to call either number

When you need information about a business or service, road conditions, or you want to report a power outage or a problem animal who is not an immediate danger, do not call 9-1-1 or the Non-Emergency number.

If you have a complaint or question regarding a service provided by the City, call the City and County Information Line at 503-823-4000 to request the number of the specific Bureau who can handle that call.

When should I file a police report online?

The Portland Police Bureau has a Citizen Online Reporting System. This internet based system allows citizens to report certain crimes committed within the City of Portland that have no suspect information.

Citizens can report the following types of incidents online:

- Additional property information (for a previously filed report)
- Lost property
- Shoplifting
- Suspicious activity within the last day (does not include incidents happening right now)
- Theft (from a publicly accessible place)
- Theft from a vehicle
- Vandalism (excluding graffiti)
- Vandalism to a motor vehicle

The Citizen Online Reporting System can be accessed at www.portlandoregon.gov/police/cor. Check this Web page often for new reporting options.



Emergency 9-1-1
Non-Emergency 503-823-3333
City of Portland Information 503-823-4000

When to Call 9-1-1 and the Non-Emergency Number



Emergency 9-1-1
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When to call 9-1-1 and the Non-Emergency number 503-823-3333

When to call 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 when it is an emergency which requires immediate response from the police, fire or ambulance. Examples include a crime in progress like a fight, a theft, a shooting, etc; a fire in a commercial building, house or car; or a medical emergency like a heart attack, stroke or car crash with injuries. If you aren't sure whether the situation is an emergency, call 9-1-1 and the call taker will determine if you need emergency help.

What will 9-1-1 ask me?

When you call 9-1-1, the call taker will ask you the nature of the emergency (fire, medical or police) and the location where help is needed. The call taker will also ask for specific details, such as:

- Physical description of the people involved.
- Description of any fire that may be burning.
- Injuries or symptoms of the person having the medical emergency.
- Your name and phone number.

The call taker's questions are important to get the right kind of help to you quickly. Answering these questions does not delay the response.

Why should I stay on the line?

While you are on the phone with the call taker, he or she sends your information to the dispatcher, who communicates directly with fire, medical and police responders. As you stay on the phone and answer questions, help is being directed to you.

The call taker may need to stay on the phone with you to provide additional information to emergency responders. Do not hang up until you are instructed to do so.

Cell phones and 9-1-1

If you call 9-1-1 from a cell phone, you will reach a recording that will direct you to press any key or say "9-1-1" at the beep. This filter is in place to minimize the accidental calls to 9-1-1. This allows call takers to remain ready to answer your emergency call.

Please do not assume that the call taker has your personal information or actual location in the computer. Be prepared to answer those questions when asked. It is always helpful to know your location when you call.

Is an interpreter available?

Language line services are available for 9-1-1 and Non-Emergency callers. Please remain on the line as the call taker connects you with an interpreter.

When to call the Non-Emergency number

The Non-Emergency number is 503-823-3333, which you can call 24 hours a day for Non-Emergency police help. Program this number into your cell phone so it is ready to use when you need it. Using the Non-Emergency number keeps 9-1-1 available for true emergencies. The same call takers who respond to 9-1-1 calls also answer the Non-Emergency line. If you call 9-1-1 for a non-emergent issue, you will be redirected to hang up and call the Non-Emergency number.

Some examples of times when you should call 503-823-3333 include:

- Your house was broken into while you were at work. The burglar is not there and you are safe.
- Your runaway child has returned home.
- You need to add information to a previously reported incident.
- Your car was stolen sometime overnight.
- Your property was vandalized earlier.

You can also call 503-823-3333 to report suspicious activity in your neighborhood. Examples of suspicious activity include:

- A person walking down a street looking in every car window.
- A person coming to your door with unusual requests, such as money for gas or food, or donations for a charity when the person is not carrying any official looking materials.
- You see some people out on the street who are behaving suspiciously. Although no obvious crimes are being committed and no one appears to be in danger, you would like to have the police check them out.