

# Reporting Suspicious Behavior to the Police



You are an extension of the eyes and ears of the police department. There are times when you may need to trust your instincts. Don't hesitate to call us, but do your best to use your senses to describe what's going on in a given situation.

Remember the following:

- Where
- Who
- What
- When
- Weapons involved
- Vehicles used
- Direction of travel

Call 9-1-1 in an emergency or for in-progress crimes with a threat to life or property. Call our Non-Emergency line, (650)522-7700, for all else.



## JOIN NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

If a Neighborhood Watch Program does not exist on your block, you can start one with help from SMPD. Just ask!

Call us at (650) 522-7791 or email us at [neighborhoodwatch@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:neighborhoodwatch@cityofsanmateo.org).

## San Mateo Police Department

[200 Franklin Parkway](http://200 Franklin Parkway)  
[San Mateo, California 94403](http://San Mateo, California 94403)  
[\(650\)522-7700](http://(650)522-7700)  
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**SAN MATEO  
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

## What is Suspicious Activity?

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When calling the police on someone "acting suspicious," it is imperative you provide articulable reasons why you believe this. Articulable means you are capable of expressing, explaining, or justifying to our dispatchers that you believe a person violated a law or regulation. For example, if you see a male subject sitting in a car at night, that alone is not suspicious. However, if you see the male sitting in his car at night doing drugs, that's a different story. Also, if you see a group of rowdy teenagers walking down the street, that alone isn't against the law. However, if you see them trying car door handles as they walk down the street, elements of a crime have been met.

We expect our dispatchers to ask clarifying questions to identify safety and crime elements in calls, to ensure that our officers have clear factors on which to base their actions when responding. We ask you to be patient and anticipate being asked those questions.

The following is not an exhaustive list, nor absolute confirmation of a crime, but we hope these examples will assist you should you ever need to call the police and provide articulable suspicions.

### SUSPICIOUS SOUNDS

- Unusual noises such as glass breaking, dogs continuously barking, or gunshots
- Screeching tires or the sound of a crash
- Screaming or yelling - an argument or pending fight, continual crying

### SUSPICIOUS VEHICLES

- Vehicles parked hastily, carelessly, abandoned while still running or with doors left open
- Strangers driving through a neighborhood several times
- Slow moving vehicle, without lights or driving aimlessly
- Someone being forced into a vehicle
- Out of place business transaction done in a secret or apparently illicit way to avoid notice
- People loading a vehicle with valuables
- Objects being thrown from a vehicle
- An obviously abandoned vehicle or a vehicle containing weapons or other items related to a crime
- Person removing mechanical parts from a vehicle

### SUSPICIOUS PERSONS

- Ringing door bells and/or checking side gates to determine occupancy
- Loitering around, peering into, or forcing entrance into a house or car
- Dressed inappropriately for conditions to possibly conceal identity
- Delivery person with wrong address or someone who asks if someone else lives there

### SUSPICIOUS PROPERTY

- Open or broken doors and windows at an unoccupied house
- Property offered for sale at a very low price
- Property such as electronics, guns, tools, or auto parts being sold out of a vehicle or at an unusual hour
- Property that has serial number obscured

