FSA - Keeping You Safe

Public Safety Tip: How to Report a Crime in Florida

A person witnessing an emergency and calling 9-1-1 is something you see all the time in the movies – but what happens when you see a crime in real life?

Knowing how to report a crime can help you respond quickly in the moment, but the appropriate action depends on the urgency of the situation. Should you call emergency dispatchers? A non-emergency number? Or do you feel more comfortable reporting what you saw anonymously?

Here are five methods for reporting a crime in Florida.

Five Ways to Report a Crime

1. **Call 9-1-1**
Calling 9-1-1 to speak with an emergency dispatcher is the primary way to contact the authorities during a crime that's in progress. It's also the number you need to call if there is an injury or other medical emergency involved. Calling 9-1-1 will connect you to emergency services including law enforcement, fire or medical assistance. Stay calm and answer the dispatcher's questions as accurately as you can. Follow all instructions as you wait for assistance.

2. **Call a Non-Emergency Line**
Not sure the situation is urgent enough for a 9-1-1 call? Virtually all agencies have a "non-emergency" line you can call in less urgent situations. Check your local law enforcement agency's website or contact your local sheriff's office for the non-emergency number. Save the appropriate number in your phone so you have it on hand when you need it.

3. **Report the Crime Via Text or App**
Some law enforcement agencies have mobile apps that allow users to report crimes or submit tips through their smartphones. These apps often provide additional features such as crime maps and safety alerts. This is a good option for non-emergency situations. In an active emergency, calling 9-1-1 is the better choice.

4. **Anonymous Tip Lines**
Did you witness something you are afraid to report for your own safety? Many law enforcement agencies have anonymous tip lines or online platforms where individuals can provide information about crimes without revealing their identity. Crime Stoppers is another common, non-law enforcement program that facilitates anonymous reporting. Some even offer a reward for providing valuable information.

For more tips please visit the Florida Sheriffs Association's Crime Prevention Tips: flsheriffs.org/crime-prevention.

5. **Visit the Sheriff's Office**
Lastly, you can physically go to your sheriff's office to report a crime. Officers at the front desk or in the lobby can guide you on the necessary steps to take. This can be helpful if you feel unsafe or would prefer speaking to an officer in-person.

However you choose to report a crime, providing the information to law enforcement is part of being a responsible citizen and keeping your community safe.

Tips for Reporting a Crime

While witnessing a crime can be incredibly stressful, try your best to stay calm. Providing clear and accurate information to law enforcement is the best thing you can do to help.

Here are a few additional tips for reporting a crime:

- If the situation is an emergency or in progress, call 911 immediately. Provide details about the nature of the emergency and your location.
- Provide a detailed description of the incident, including what happened, who was involved and any relevant details. Be specific and stick to the facts.
- If a vehicle is involved, try to note the make, model, color and license plate number. This information is crucial for law enforcement to track down suspects.
- If you are reporting the crime over the phone, follow the dispatcher's instructions. Stay on the line until the dispatcher says it's OK to hang up. They may need additional information or clarification.

Stay Informed with FSA

As with most emergency situations, being prepared and having a plan can help you respond appropriately if you witness a crime. Take a few minutes to save local contact numbers, including your local sheriff's office, non-emergency number and local Crime Stoppers, in your phone so you can access the information quickly later.

The Florida Sheriffs Association is committed to helping you stay informed and stay safe. You can read more crime and public safety tips here.

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