

Eyewitness Training

The following material was provided to Wilhaggin Del Dayo Neighborhood Association's Paws On Patrol Program by the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department. It provides helpful guidelines you may follow as a Paws volunteer or as a watchful neighbor.

Key Things a Witness Should Observe and Report

- S** - Size (the number of people, gender, ages, and physical descriptions)
- A** - Activity (describe exactly what they are doing)
- L** - Location (provide exact location)
- U** - Uniform (describe what they are wearing, including shoes)
- T** - Time (provide date, time, and duration of activity)
- E** - Equipment (describe vehicle, make, color etc., license plate, camera, guns, etc)

Sound easy? Unfortunately, only about half of all crimes are ever reported. Too bad, because law enforcement can't do anything if they don't know what happened. Eyewitness information is the key to solving many crimes. Remember these tips when reporting a crime or a suspected crime:

Call the Sheriff's Department immediately. Here are the numbers to call:

1. If you believe you are in personal danger or if you are witnessing a crime in progress, CALL 9-1-1. Or, if you are using a cell phone, dial (916) 874-5111.
2. If you wish to report suspicious activity, call the Sheriff's Department non-emergency number: (916) 874-5115. When the recording answers, press "0" to bypass all the recorded options and get straight to the dispatch officer.

Tell the dispatch officer who answers your call as much information as you can. No fact is too trivial. In many cases it is what witnesses tell officers about the criminal that results in an arrest. Law enforcement responding to your call can use answers to as many of the following questions as possible. However, remember that wrong information is worse than no information at all, so be as accurate as possible.

- What occurred?
- When did it occur?
- Where did it occur?
- How many suspects were involved?
- What did they do?
- What did they say, if anything?
- What did they take?
- Which way did they go?
- Were there any other witnesses? What are their names, addresses, phone numbers?
- Is there any other information that you believe is important?
- Do you have any security camera or cell phone photographs you can provide?
- Describe the suspects.
- Describe the vehicle.

If WDDNA has a deputy on patrol at the time of the event, he or she will be dispatched. Otherwise, the call will go out to regular patrol deputies. In the latter case, deputies may not be able to respond instantly. The department must prioritize calls based on apparent danger to human life. So don't be discouraged. The department will respond as soon as possible.

Some of the items listed below appear more than once, since the same behavior can hint at different criminal activities.

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY -- PERSONS	
Circumstances	Possible Crime
Going door to door in a residential area, especially if one or more persons go to the rear of the residence.	Burglary suspects or trespassers.
Waiting or loitering in front of a house or business, if business is closed or house is unoccupied.	Burglary suspects.
Forcing entrance, or entering your neighbor's house, when it is unoccupied.	Burglary, theft or trespassing.
Person running, especially if something of value is being carried.	Suspect fleeing the scene of a crime.
Person carrying property that is not wrapped, at an unusual hour.	Suspect fleeing the scene of a burglary or robbery.
Excessive foot traffic to and from a certain residence occurring on a daily or regular basis.	Vice, drug, or fence operation.
Person screaming.	Rape, assault or domestic violence.
Person loitering around cars or going car to car peering into them, especially in parking lots or on streets.	Car thief or car burglar.
Persons loitering around schools, parks, or secluded areas.	Sex offenders.
Persons offering items for sale at a very low price.	Trying to sell stolen property.
Strangers loitering or driving through a neighborhood several times.	Burglary suspects.
"Delivery Man" with a wrong address or one who asks if someone else lives there.	Burglary suspects.
Unusual noises such as gunshots, screaming, or dogs barking continuously.	Burglary, assault rape, domestic violence, etc.
A person exhibiting unusual mental or physical symptoms.	May be injured, under influence of drugs, or needs medical attention.



SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY -- VEHICLES	
Circumstances	Possible Crime
Slow moving vehicle, without lights, or driving appears aimless; in any location including residential streets, schools, and playgrounds.	Burglar, drug pusher, or sex offender.
Parked or occupied vehicle with one or more persons, especially if observed at an unusual hour.	Lookouts for a burglary or robbery.
Vehicle being loaded with valuables if parked by a business or unoccupied residence.	Burglary or theft in progress.
Abandoned vehicle parked on block.	Stolen car.
Vehicle containing weapons.	Robbery suspect or vehicle; selling stolen items or drugs.
Someone being forced into a vehicle, especially females or juveniles.	Kidnapping, assault, or attempted rape.
Vehicle where a business transaction is being conducted, around school or parks.	Selling stolen items or drugs.
Person attempting to forcibly enter a locked vehicle, especially in a parking lot.	Theft of a car or its contents.
Persons removing mechanical parts or accessories from a vehicle.	Theft or vandalism.
Objects thrown from a vehicle.	Disposal of contraband.
SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY -- PROPERTY	
Circumstances	Possible Crime
Going door to door in a residential area, especially if one or more persons go to the rear of the residence.	Burglary suspects or trespassers.
Waiting or loitering in front of a house or business, if closed or unoccupied.	Burglary suspects.
Property in homes, garages, or storage areas if collection is large, or items are in good but unused condition.	Stolen property.
Property offered for sale at very low price.	Stolen property.
Property in vehicles not normally found, especially if observed at an unusual hour, such as TV sets, stereos, guns, or auto parts.	Stolen property.
Property carried by person on foot; especially at unusual hour or place. Very suspicious if running with unwrapped property.	Property lost or stolen in a burglary or robbery.
Property being removed from or loaded into a vehicle or building at unusual hours.	Burglary or theft in progress.
Continuous repair operations at a non-business location.	Stolen property being altered.
Open or broken doors and windows at a closed business or unoccupied residence.	Burglary in progress, completed burglary, or vandalism.
Sound of breaking glass.	Burglary or vandalism.

SUSPECTS

A good suspect description is invaluable to any law enforcement investigation. It will not only help in the capture of the perpetrator, but also in obtaining a conviction.

The most important features to identify are sex, race, height, weight, approximate age, hair color, eye color, clothing and any scars, marks or tattoos. Work from the top to bottom, making mental (or written) notes of all the following items. Write everything down as soon as possible.

Hair _____

Color, length, style, wig, cap,
Color, glasses, anything unusual
hat, markings on cap or hat, ski
mask, baseball hat, how is it worn

Eyes _____

Color, glasses, anything
unusual

Face _____

Nose, lips, teeth, ears,
mustache, beard, goatee,
sideburns, scars, marks

Clothing _____

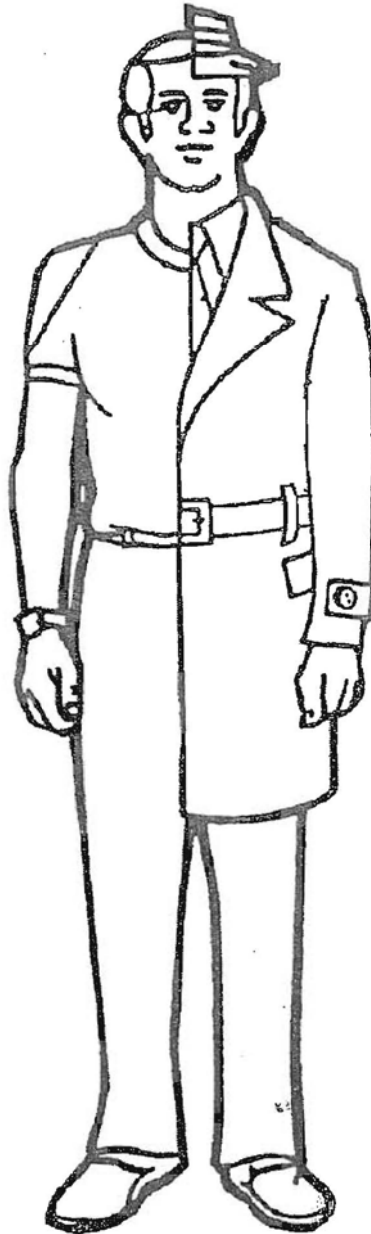
Coat, jacket, shirt, pants,
dress, shorts, gloves, tie, scarf,
vest, bandana

Race _____

Complexion, nationality,
Ethnicity

Other _____

Anything else unusual,
backpack or carrying anything,
style of walk (gait or limp), any
physical disabilities or scars,
marks, or tattoos.



Height _____

Sex _____

Voice _____

Language, accent,
lisp, loud, soft, other
speech characteristics

Weapon _____

Gun (revolver, automatic,
pistol, rifle), knife, club, bat,
crowbar

Weight _____

Age _____

Shoes _____

Shoes, boots, style, color

VEHICLES

Being able to provide law enforcement with an accurate vehicle description could make the difference between a criminal getting away or being apprehended. A description like "They're in a four-door white car" just doesn't provide enough information to officers.

You should familiarize yourself with the following descriptive characteristics and use them when describing the suspect vehicle to officers. Practice identifying cars when you are out and about. Most cars have the make and model printed somewhere near the trunk area.

Make _____

Chevy, Ford, Mercury, Dodge,
GM, Plymouth, Saturn, Buick,
Oldsmobile, Chrysler, Cadillac

Honda, Kia, Nissan, Toyota,
Isuzu, Mazda, Acura, Infiniti, Lexus
BMW, Volkswagen, Volvo, Saab,
Mercedes

Foreign or Domestic

Kind _____

Car - Two door or four door, sports
car, hatchback, convertible

Truck - Small pickup, large pickup,
flat bed, boxed cargo truck, extended
or king cab, dual rear wheels, pulling
a trailer, camper

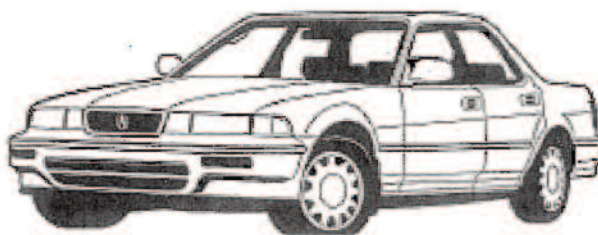
Motorcycle - Bullet bike, street
bike, off-road, small or large,
domestic or foreign

SUV - Hard top or convertible, off-
road, rear spare tire, two door or four
door, top rack

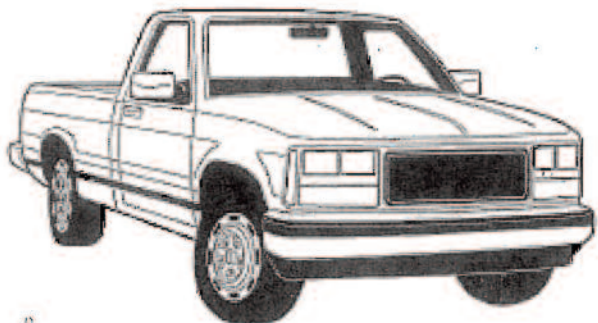
Van - Panel van, Custom van, rear
and side windows, company van
(company logo or writing on side)

Other _____

Any identifying bumper stickers,
dents, scratches, broken windows,
etc.? Was it damaged in any way? Was
it modified in any way?



Occupants _____



Model _____

Year _____



State _____

Plate # _____



Color _____