



# Partners In Crime Prevention

September/October 2008

John Lovick Sheriff Snohomish County

Volume 12 Issue 5



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## Partners In Crime Prevention– New Name for Newsletter

We are changing the name of our newsletter in order to be clearer that successfully preventing crime takes citizens and police working together.

The concept of “partnerships” is a relatively modern approach by governments to work on problems that affect citizens. Local government organizations, such as the Sheriff’s Office, often work with other governments. For example, the Sheriff’s Office participates in the federally funded Snohomish Regional Drug Task Force with other local police departments and federal police agencies to catch mid to upper level drug organizations. It contracts with Community Transit to provide a transit police unit that protects bus passengers from physical harm and their property from damage and theft. It also participates in the DUI Task Force with the State Patrol and other local police agencies to ensure the safety of the county’s roadways from drunk drivers.

But partnering with citizens and citizen groups is probably as important as with governmental agencies. Citizens are on the front lines when it comes to crime. Citizens are the victims and the witnesses who can show deputies where to find the criminals in the county. Providing information to the Sheriff’s Office is critical to catching crooks.

Citizens can also take actions that prevent crime. Whether it is locking your house or your car, protecting your identity, or cleaning up graffiti on your property, often your actions can be more effective than the police in keeping crime out of your community.

Partnerships are a two way street. When citizens take action it is reasonable to expect action from the Sheriff’s Office. That action can be providing deterrence with patrols, reducing crime by talking to potential perpetrators or ultimately making arrests.

Partnerships are not expecting someone else to do all of the work. To be effective, the police cannot have sole responsibility for crime prevention. Citizens need to do their part also.

We are all busy. Your role does not have to be extensive. Taking the responsibility to protect yourself, to ensure that you will not be a victim goes a long way in preventing crime. Calling 911 when you see a crime or suspicious activity does not have to take a lot of work or be risky. It’s just a matter of getting in the habit to protect ourselves, then it is easy.

*Steve Moller*  
Editor



## Description Checklist

### *Suspect- note the following:*

- Gender
- Approximate age
- Race
- Clothing description
- Hair color and style
- Eyes (if possible)
- Tattoos, scars or birthmarks
- Weapons- Gun? Knife? Stick?
- If the suspect is on foot, where was he/she last seen and what direction was he/she going?

### *Vehicle- report:*

- License plate number. Very important
- Make (Ford, Chevy, Toyota, etc.)
- Model (Camry, Accord, etc.)
- Color
- If you don't know what model, is it a 2-door, 4-door, pick-up, SUV?
- How many occupants?

# Being a Good Witness– You Are Essential to Catching Crooks

Reporting crime or suspicious activity is important to keeping your neighborhood safe. If you witness a crime and do not call 911 the Sheriff's Office cannot investigate and catch the criminals.

When you call 911, ask for contact with a deputy. Give the call taker your name and phone number. Answer any questions that the call taker asks to the best of your ability. Your call will be assigned a priority based on what you tell the call taker.

A deputy will come out or call you as soon as possible. How long this takes depends on the priority of your call and the Sheriff's Office workload at the time.

Frequently people have fear of retribution after reporting a crime. Your name and phone number are important however. For 911 and for a deputy, you are the witness that gives them the best information until the deputy can come on scene.

If deputies talk to a suspect in your neighborhood they do not say "so and so tells me that you are..." They keep your name confidential. If you want to be sure of confidentiality, tell 911 that you want your name to be confidential when you give your name and number. You can also ask for "telephone contact" only.

Most of the time, you will not have to go to court. If you do however, your cooperation is important to ensure justice.

Here are answers to some questions about being a witness from Janice Albert of the Snohomish County Prosecutor's Office:

### **Does giving your name to a deputy mean that you have to go to court?**

No, giving your name does not mean you have to go to court. Giving your name just says that you saw or heard something that may or may not be relevant to any prosecution based on a police report. You may end up on someone's witness list, either the State or the defense. You may be called by a prosecutor, defense attorney, or investigator and asked followup questions.

**How often do witnesses end up going to court?** Civilian witnesses are needed to testify only if a case goes to trial. Most criminal cases - and I mean an enormous percentage - never go to trial. Most cases are resolved by compromise, negotiation, or plea agreement well before trial. Even cases that are first contested are usually resolved.

### **If I give my name, address and/or telephone number, will that information show up in public police reports?**

That information will show up in police reports unless you make a request to have it kept confidential. To make a request that will be granted, you need to be able to swear that you have real and specific privacy interests (your safety, the safety of your family).



## Being a Good Witness— continued

**Why can't a criminal be convicted without my name as a witness?** A police investigation based on an anonymous tip is not worth the paper it is printed on. Police reports are forwarded to the prosecutor. The prosecutor must ask two preliminary questions before she files charges:

1) **Is the behavior described a crime?** If the answer is no, the case is declined. If the answer is yes, she moves to the next question.

2) **Can I prove it?** A charge must be supported by evidence. In the case of, say, vandalism, we would need evidence that there was vandalism done (seen by an eyewitness who can testify to what the property looked like before and after the incident) and that the defendant was the one who did it. If the witness is anonymous, we cannot call him to prove the case. That means the case cannot be filed.

**How often are witnesses harassed?** The instances where defendants have retaliated against witnesses are very few. I am not saying it could not happen. I am saying that it typically does not happen.

## Calling 911— How SNOPAC Works

SNOPAC is the agency that dispatches Sheriff's Office deputies. When you call any 911 agency, the call taker will confirm with you the location where police, fire, or medical responders are needed. They may also ask other questions as needed. Please be patient and answer all questions to the best of your ability. Answering questions is not slowing down the dispatch of your call!

Almost all home and business telephone calls to 911 will display a name, address and telephone number to the 911 operator. Cellular telephones provide only the caller's telephone number.

Although the operator receives basic information based on the telephone from which you are calling, it is possible that the database could be in error, or that what you are reporting is not at the same location as the telephone you are using. For these reasons, the operator is required to confirm the correctness of the information with you.

When the call taker has finished taking your information, please release the line as soon as possible. Please help us keep the lines as available as possible so that all emergency calls can be answered as quickly as possible.

## Calling 911— Some Tips

- *Let the operator guide the conversation.*
- *It is stressful for most citizens to call 9-1-1 for any reason. Try to remain calm. Once you are talking to a 911 operator, you are talking to a professional with hundreds of hours of training, who knows just how to handle your call, and who has access to all appropriate services.*
- *Don't worry that additional questions are slowing down the dispatch. As soon as the call taker has basic minimal information the dispatch will be started, even as you answer other questions.*
- *Depending upon the type of call, the operator may keep you on the line for additional information, or to receive instructions.*
- *There is no charge to call 9-1-1.*



## Attorney General Alert— Foreclosure Fraud

With housing foreclosures rising in Snohomish County 39% in August over one year ago, and with the mortgage crisis nationally threatening our economy, the potential for scammers to come up with fraudulent schemes that promise to rescue at risk homeowners from foreclosure and bankruptcy has increased.

In fact, according to the Washington State Attorney General's Office homeowners have already been victimized.

Two ways that scammers use to victimize homeowners in danger of foreclosure include:

### **Distressed home purchasers—**

They have homeowners sign over their property by promising to sell the home back once the homeowners get back on their feet financially. Often they allow the homeowner to remain in the home as tenants in the meantime. The homeowners frequently do not understand the transaction, receive little, if any, financial benefit and are ultimately stripped of both their home and whatever equity they had in it.

### **Distressed home consultants—**

These scammers offer phantom help to homeowners in financial distress, typically with false promises to “stop the foreclosure” or “save the home.” The consulting services are often of little or no

value and serve only to delay homeowners from seeking real assistance from qualified professionals such as mortgage counselors or attorneys.

The scammers find their victims by reviewing foreclosure documents at county courthouses which are public records.

The Attorney General's Office has begun a program of notifying homeowners in danger of facing foreclosure of the dangers of these scams. If you receive the warning, please review it carefully. As with any other fraud, scammers offer something too good to be true.

For more information about foreclosure fraud go to:

Attorney General's Press Release:

<http://www.atg.wa.gov/pressrelease.aspx?&id=20778>

Attorney General's Foreclosure information web page:

<http://www.atg.wa.gov/foreclosure.aspx>

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Steve Moller— Editor



1-800-  
CRIME-13

### **Tip Lines:**

- Phone:  
425-388-3845
- Sheriff's Website:  
[www.co.snohomish.wa.us/SheriffRpts/AnonymousTips/default.htm](http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/SheriffRpts/AnonymousTips/default.htm)

### **Crime Prevention Coordinators:**

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