

Suburban Police Anti-Crime Network

Drug Enforcement Unit

Crime Prevention Tips - Reporting Drug Activity in Your Neighborhood

Signs of Drug Activity

Like many communities throughout the United States, Lyndhurst and the Hillcrest area face a growing battle against drugs. The police can't solve this problem alone. Success requires community involvement. It is important that you know what an investigation requires and how you can help.

It's often hard to be certain that what you are seeing involves drugs, but some patterns may indicate drug activity:

- An unusually large amount of traffic comes to the house or apartment building — in cars, taxis, or walking — often at strange hours. Visitors may sometimes pound on doors or shout to be let in. This traffic is usually quick, and the people stay only a short time. Sometimes they don't even go in at all; instead, someone comes out to meet them.
- Finding drugs or drug paraphernalia (syringes, pipes, baggies, etc.) in the area.
- Repeated, observable exchanges of items, especially where money is visible.
- Offers to sell you drugs, or conversations about drugs that you overhear.
- Noxious odors coming from around the houses or buildings, such as "musty" smells.
- Houses or buildings where extreme security measures seem to have been taken.
- Houses or buildings where no owner or primary renter is apparent, and no home activities — yard work, painting, maintenance, etc. — seem to go on.

How to Report Drug Activity

Don't assume the police already know about the activity, or that a neighbor will call. Don't assume one report is all that is needed. If the activity keeps on occurring, keep on reporting it. If the pattern changes, report that change. All neighbors affected by the drug activity are encouraged to report.

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Drug Activity in Progress

Drug Activity — which police need to be aware of but do not need to respond to immediately — can be reported by calling one of the following numbers. You can express your concern by asking for a police report to be filed.

- **911** for activity in progress.
- **(216) 317-1101** to report activity directly to the narcotics unit.
- **spandrugunit@gmail.com** to report activity via email to the narcotics unit.

You can report activity anonymously, but it is more helpful if you will give your name and telephone number in case other information is needed. Your name will be kept confidential if requested.

What the Police Would Like to Know

- What makes you think drugs are being sold?
- Which drugs are involved? Have you found any drug paraphernalia?
- How long has the activity gone on?
- Have you reported that activity before? If so, when?
- What is the address where the drug activity is occurring (including the apartment number), or the closest intersection?
- What type of building is it (single family home, business, apartment)?
- Where on the property is the drug activity taking place (e.g., at the front door, out the back window, in the alley, etc.)?
- Do you know where the drugs are kept?
- What is the pattern of activity (times of day and days of the week when it is heaviest; number of people in and out at a given hour; do cars drive up to the house or do people park and walk up; do they arrive in taxis; from which direction do they come; how do they leave)? Keeping a written log of your observations, including date and time, can help identify patterns. Have there been any other crimes associated with the operation (e.g., threats or assaults on neighbors, increased burglaries, etc.)?
- Do you know the name and address of the property owner?
- Do you know the name(s) of the person(s) suspected of dealing?
- What do the suspected dealer(s) look like (sex, age, race, height, weight, build, hair and eye color, hair style, facial hair, complexion, eyewear, distinctive clothing, etc.)? Be as specific as possible with your descriptions.

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- What type(s) of car(s) do the suspected dealer(s) drive (make, model, year, two-door or four-door, license number, license state, exterior color, distinctive features)?
- What do the "customers" look like (typical sex, age, race, clothing style)? A detailed description of each buyer isn't necessary, but an overview would be useful.
- What are the license numbers of the customer's cars? License numbers alone won't result in an arrest or probable cause for a search warrant, but can be useful in an investigation.
- How many people live in the house? Are there any children? How old are they?
- Any dogs? What kind? How many?
- Are there bars or any other types of reinforcements on the house windows and doors? What kind? Where? Any alarm or security systems? What kind?
- Have you seen any weapons? What kind? How many?

What Happens After You Make a Report?

Officer Response

When you report drug activity, an officer will respond, as soon as one is available. However, drug transactions seldom involve any danger to either participants or bystanders, and crimes that endanger someone must have the first priority. Also, drug deals are over quickly, and are often completed before an officer can arrive.

Not Sufficient for an Arrest

Citizen reports are not usually the primary justification for a drug arrest. Unless you have special training or experience with drugs or drug users, the courts will say an arrest based on only your testimony isn't justified. Since few citizens can meet the strict legal standards, officers who do have the training and experience must make their own observations and collect evidence the courts will accept.

Arrests can't be made just because someone says they saw a drug deal. One reason is that a significant number of such complaints are found to be invalid when they are investigated. This can happen when neighbors misinterpret what they see. Sometimes it happens because the drug complaint is revenge for other neighborhood problems. Both your rights and those of other people have to be protected in the process of spotting drug trafficking.

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Provides Cause for an Investigation

Your reports are still very important. Even though they can't be used as the direct justification for an arrest, they let the police know there's a problem, and they provide a reason for police to undertake an investigation of a person or location. Under the laws of our land, police can't stop or investigate people without reasonable suspicion.

Search Warrants

If sufficient cause can be confirmed, a written request is made to a magistrate for a search warrant for the house or building. Residents who possess drugs will be arrested. The court may release them on bail, however, and they may return to their neighborhood while they await trial, but most dealers move elsewhere, or stop dealing after they have been arrested. Under the law, certain property may be confiscated by the government, and the proceeds of the sale given to law enforcement agencies to be used for drug enforcement activities.