

## How to describe suspects & activities

When you call to report suspicious and criminal activity, how you describe your observations helps responding officer(s) assess the situation and respond appropriately.

### Describing activities

Provide as much detail as you can about the behavior you are observing. Relay why the activity is suspicious and not typical for your neighborhood. This information will assist the call taker in prioritizing the officer response to your call.

### Describing suspects

Take note of gender, race, age, height, weight, eyes, hair, scars, tattoos, glasses, facial hair, clothing and anything else that would help police find the person. Pay special attention to unique features and ones the suspect cannot change, such as tattoos.

### Describing vehicles

Take note of the type of vehicle, license plate number and the direction the suspect is travelling. Relay the color, make, year, body style and any other characteristics such as dents or bumper stickers.

## When NOT to call either number

When you need information about a business, service or road conditions, or you want to report a power outage or a problem animal who is not an immediate danger, do not call 9-1-1 or the Non-Emergency number.

If you have a complaint or question regarding a service provided by the City, call the City and County Information Line at 503-823-4000. Call takers will provide you with referrals to the specific Bureau responsible for that service.

## Can I text to 9-1-1?

You should always call 9-1-1 to ask for emergency response. However, if talking on the phone creates a greater danger or if a person is deaf, hard of hearing or has limited speaking capabilities, texting to 9-1-1 is appropriate for emergencies. Call if you can, text if you can't.

## When should I file a police report online?

The Portland Police Bureau has a Citizen Online Reporting System. This internet based system allows individuals to report certain crimes committed within the City of Portland that have no suspect information.

The following can be reported online:

- Additional property info (property discovered missing after filing a police report)
- Lost property
- Shoplifting
- Suspicious activity within the last day (does not include incidents happening right now)
- Theft (from a publicly accessible place)
- Theft from a vehicle
- Vandalism (excluding graffiti)

The Citizen Online Reporting System can be accessed at [www.portlandoregon.gov/police/cor](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/cor). Check this web page often for new reporting options.



**Emergency 9-1-1**  
**Non-Emergency 503-823-3333**  
**City of Portland Info 503-823-4000**

# When to Call 9-1-1 and the Non-Emergency Number



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# When to call 9-1-1 and the Non-Emergency number 503-823-3333

## When to call 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 when there is an emergency—**an immediate threat to life or property**— which requires immediate response from police, fire or medical. Examples include a crime in progress such as a fight, theft or shooting; a fire in a commercial building, house or car; or a medical emergency including a heart attack, stroke or car crash with injuries. If you aren't sure whether the situation is an emergency, call 9-1-1 and the call taker will determine if you need emergency help.

## What will 9-1-1 ask me?

When you call 9-1-1, the call taker will ask you the location and nature of the emergency (fire, medical or police). The call taker will also ask for specific details, such as:

- Where is the emergency (exact address, cross streets or landmarks)?
- What is your name and the phone number you are calling from?
- What is happening?
- If there is criminal activity, what are the suspect and vehicle descriptions?
- What are the injuries or symptoms of the person having the medical emergency?

The call taker's questions are necessary to determine the safest and most effective response to your emergency. Answering these questions does not delay the response. However, emergency responders do prioritize the calls waiting for response based on the severity of the incidents.

## Why should I stay on the line?

While you are on the phone with the call taker, he or she sends your information to the dispatcher, who communicates directly with fire, medical and police responders. As you stay on the phone and answer questions, help is being directed to you.

The call taker may need to stay on the phone with you to obtain additional information for emergency responders. Please do not hang up until you are instructed to do so.

## Cell phones and 9-1-1

If you call 9-1-1 from a cell phone, you will reach a recording that directs you to press any key or say "9-1-1" at the beep. This filter is in place to minimize pocket dialing or other accidental calls to 9-1-1. This allows call takers to remain ready to answer your emergency call.

Please do not assume that the call taker has your personal information or actual location in the computer. Be prepared to answer those questions when asked. It is always helpful to know your location when you call.

## Is an interpreter available?

Language line services are available for 9-1-1 and Non-Emergency callers. By saying in English the language you speak, the call taker can more readily connect with the appropriate interpreter. There may be a delay, so please remain on the line.

## When to call the Non-Emergency number

The Non-Emergency number is 503-823-3333, which is available 24 hours a day for Non-Emergency police assistance. Program this number into your cell phone so it is ready to use when you need it. Using the Non-Emergency number keeps 9-1-1 phone lines available for true emergencies. The same call takers who respond to 9-1-1 calls also answer the Non-Emergency line. If you call 9-1-1 for a non-emergent issue, you will be directed to hang up and call the Non-Emergency number.

Some examples of instances when you should call 503-823-3333 include:

- Your house was broken into while you were at work. The burglar is not there and you are safe.
- Your child who ran away has returned home.
- You need to add information to a previously reported incident.
- Your car was stolen sometime overnight.
- Your property was vandalized earlier and there is a suspect.

You can also call 503-823-3333 to report suspicious activity in your neighborhood. Examples of suspicious activity include:

- A person walking down your street is looking in car windows.
- A person comes to your door with unusual requests, such as money for gas or food, or donations for a charity when the person is not carrying any official looking materials.
- You see some people out on the street who are behaving suspiciously. Although no obvious crimes are being committed and no one appears to be in danger, you would like to have the police check them out.