OFFICE OF
Community
& Civic Life

Crime Prevention
Program

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City of Portland

Burglary Prevention - Commercial

A commercial burglary is committed when there is unlawful entry of a commercial structure with the intent to commit a crime, usually a theft. Burglary is a non-confrontational crime that occurs when the business is closed and unoccupied. In most cases, burglars forcibly enter through doors, windows, skylights, or other openings by prying them open, smashing glass windows or doors, forcing the locks open, or kicking doors in. A significant amount of retail crime are attributable to employee theft. Burglaries can often involve current or ex-employees' participation or collusion with offenders.

What can make your business a target?

Burglaries may seem random in occurrence; however, they usually involve a selective process. Burglars generally choose locations based on a number of key factors:

- ☐ Occupancy
- ☐ Visibility or survivability
- ☐ Accessibility
- ☐ Vulnerability or security
- ☐ Goods sold
- ☐ Ease of access

Preventing commercial burglary

Checking your property and habits for needed preventative measures is the key to successful burglary prevention and reduces your risk of becoming a victim. Use the checklist below to see where you may need, or could make, improvements for better burglary prevention:

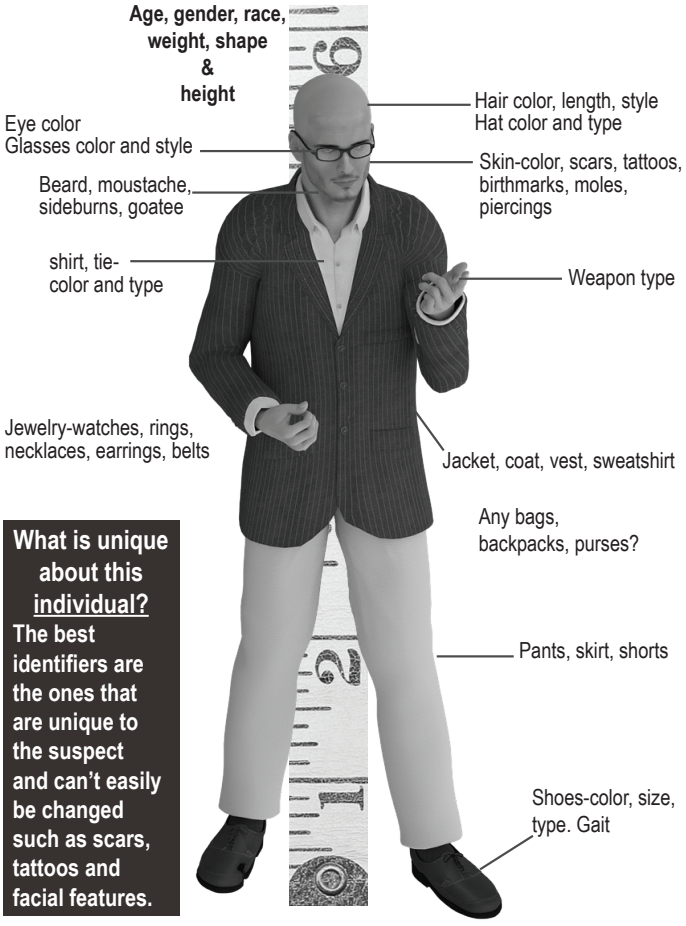
- ☐ Security cameras are active and "camera recording" signs are in a visible location.
- ☐ Valuable merchandise is removed from display windows and secured before closing and leaving
- ☐ Lighting around the perimeter of the building is maintained.
- ☐ Landscaping is maintained to avoid impaired visibility and reduce hiding places.
- ☐ Shrubbery is selectively placed under windows and/or access points to deter burglars.
- ☐ Bathrooms and customer access rooms are checked before locking up and leaving.
- ☐ Trash cans are secured and in a well lit area to deter public access.
- ☐ All surveillance recordings are kept for at least one week.
- ☐ All entry-points are secured upon leaving the business unoccupied (e.g. windows, roof access, doors, skylights, etc.).
- ☐ Sound based alarm system installed.

Identify suspicious activity

Suspicious activity is any behavior that causes alarm. Behavior is what makes someone's activities suspicious, not their appearance, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, or housing status. These details will be important to relay to the police to describe the person(s) involved in suspicious activity, but shouldn't be used as the basis of determining whether something is suspicious. We encourage business owners and employees to have a healthy vigilance over their environment by being aware of what is going on around them and responding to those cues that indicate a problem or the potential for one. Suspicious activity can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- ☐ Slow moving vehicle without lights.
- ☐ Vehicle driving slowly, and aimlessly, back and forth on a street.
- ☐ Loitering in front of a business.
- ☐ Multiple visits to your store (multiple times in one day) without making a purchase.
- ☐ Person loading valuables into a vehicle that is parked by a closed business.
- ☐ Someone attempting to forcibly enter a locked entrance.
- ☐ Person running away with items of value (e.g. TV, stereo, packages).

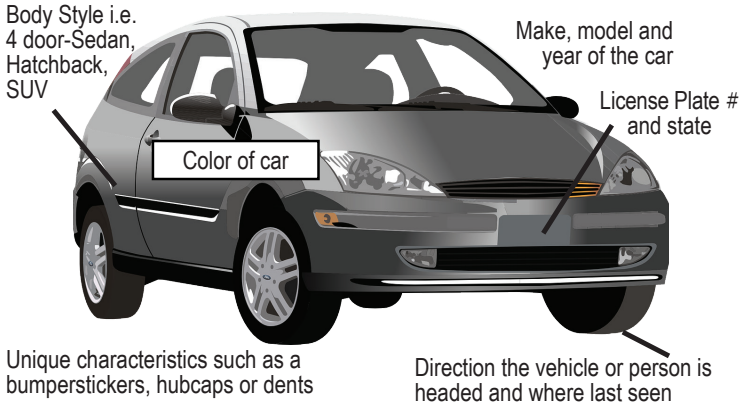
If you see a burglary in progress call 9-1-1 and do not intervene. When you call for police assistance, describing what you have seen accurately allows a responding officer(s) to know specifically what they are looking for and where to look for it. Describe one suspect at a time from head to toe. For identifying vehicles use the C.Y.M.B.O.L.S. method: Color, Year, Make, Body style, Other marks/damages, License, and State. The charts below provide examples of key identifying features for identifying persons and vehicles.



What is unique about this individual?
The best identifiers are the ones that are unique to the suspect and can't easily be changed such as scars, tattoos and facial features.

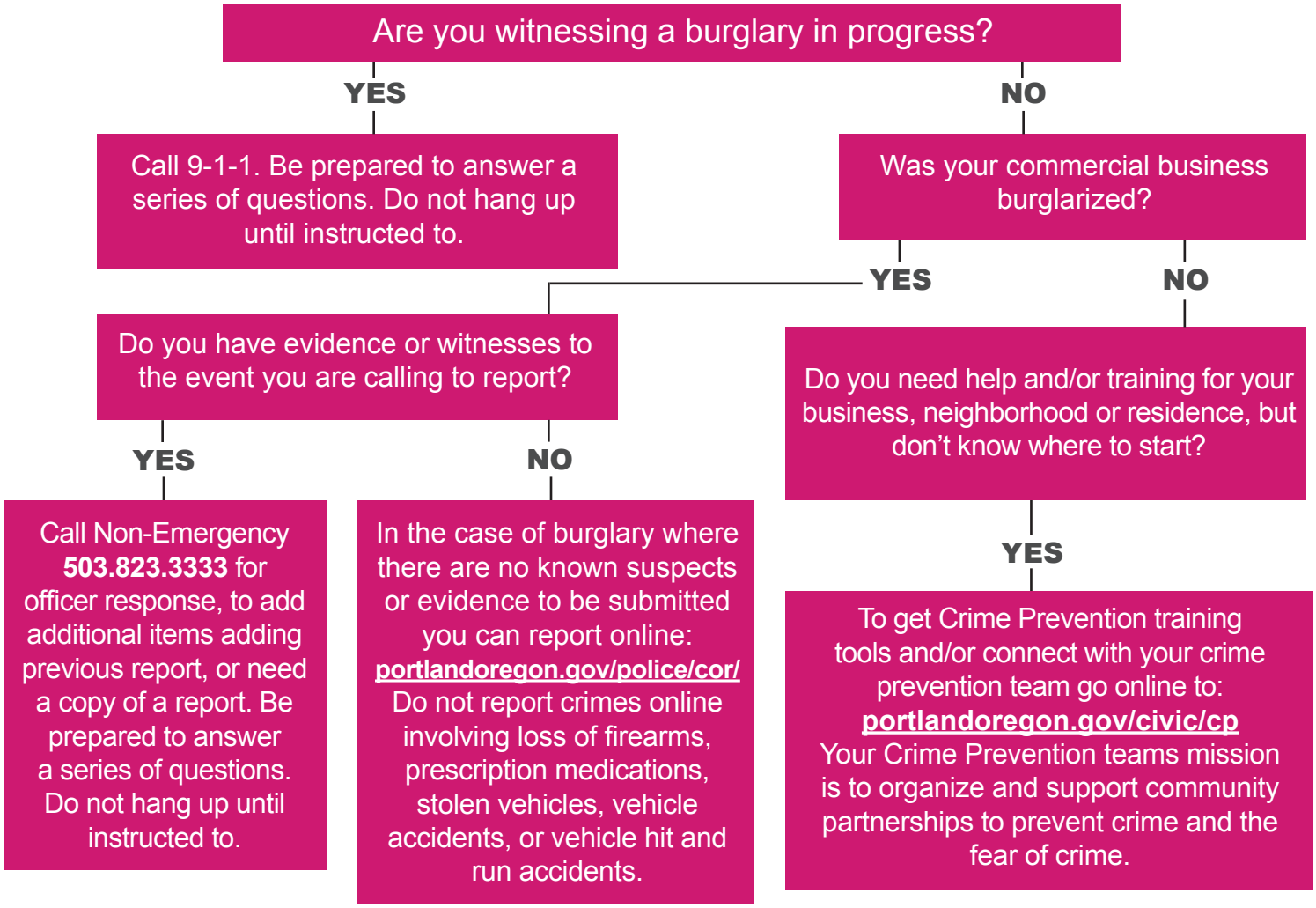
Note: if you do not have evidence of the burglary (e.g. witness, surveillance etc.) still file a police report. Report crime every time, with or without evidence.

Is the suspect walking or driving a car, motorcycle or bicycle? Take note of:



Reporting Burglary

Robbery and burglary often get confused, knowing the difference is essential. Robbery is defined as: taking another's property by force, threat of force or putting the victim in fear of immediate harm (e.g. a stick-up, mugging). Burglary is defined as: unlawfully entering a home, business or other structure with intent to commit a theft or other crime. The following chart will give you assistance in proper protocol and response to a burglary. If you see anything that is clearly dangerous or life-threatening, or you have strong suspicions of either, call 9-1-1 immediately.



Additional Resources

How to obtain a case number: The officer will provide you with a case number at the time of the report. If you don't receive a case number, call Portland Police Records Division at 503.823.0043.

How to get a copy of a police report: Purchase copies by calling the Portland Police Records Division at 503.823.0041 or file a request online at portlandoregon.gov/police/article/561936.

Report additional stolen items: You can report additional items online by visiting portlandoregon.gov/police/cor/ and click on the link for "Additional Property Information" or call the Non-Emergency at 503.823.3333.

If you locate your stolen property at a pawnshop, yard sale or online: Contact Non-Emergency at 503.823.3333 and request an officer. You will need relevant information to establish ownership, such as an original police report, serial numbers, receipts, etc.

Reporting Toolkit

Is it an immediate or life-threatening emergency?

YES

Dial 911 - Be prepared to provide information (i.e. location, suspect details, involved persons). Do not hang up until instructed to do so.

NO

Are you calling to report a crime or suspicious activity?

YES

Does the incident involve any of the following:

- Known suspect(s)
- Domestic violence
- Firearms
- RX Medication
- Stolen vehicles
- Vehicular accidents
- Hit and runs
- Require police presence

NO

Report online:
portlandoregon.gov/police/cor/

YES

Call Portland Non-Emergency at (503) 823-3333.

NO

Are you reporting livability issues and violations (e.g. campsites, potholes, illegal/ abandoned vehicles)?

YES

Go to pdxreporter.org and file a report (you will need a portlandoregon.gov account to login).

NO

Do you need help and/or training for your business, neighborhood or residence, but don't know where to start?

YES

To get more training and connect with your Crime Prevention Team go online to:

portlandoregon.gov/civic/cp

Your Crime Prevention Team's mission is to organize and support community partnerships to prevent crime and the fear of crime. You can also find online resources and training tools on the Office of Community & Civic Life, Crime Prevention Program website portlandoregon.gov/civic/cpadvice.

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