

Reporting of Suspicious or Criminal Activity

Recently, numerous postings have been made on social media regarding various activities that citizens have felt was either suspicious or criminal in nature. Some of the postings have contained photos or perhaps video footage.

Please understand that the premature posting of information be it photos or video on social media can be detrimental and ultimately jeopardize any chance of a successful prosecution in some criminal proceedings.

Incidents that rise to the level of a criminal violation require an investigation in order to present the facts to a judge and jury. Witnesses must be interviewed and photos or video must be authenticated if they are to be introduced in a court of law as evidence.

Often times, the accused must be interviewed and the information drawn from that interview can facilitate an expedited outcome or disposition. If handled appropriately, some cases can proceed without witnesses having to testify in court or perhaps allow for them to remain anonymous.

When you post limited details on social media for all of the public to see rather than reporting it to the local authorities, you are alerting ALL parties to include the person that might need to be investigated. You also may have just damaged the case before it even begins.

Law enforcement must have the chance to investigate. You may be the reason that a victim will not receive the justice that they deserve or you might be giving the suspect the "heads up".

If given ample warning, a criminal suspect may have time to manufacture an alibi or he may destroy and hide evidence that could be the deciding factor in a "guilty" versus "not guilty" verdict.

Do not allow yourself to fall into the misconception that if an issue or event is publicized that it will create pressure or a movement that will result in the outcome that you are looking for.

Social media will never take the place of a thorough investigation conducted by trained and experienced law enforcement officers that present cases daily in a court of law and not the court of public opinion.

Avoid placing yourself in a position where you may experience civil exposure for public postings of information that has yet to be corroborated or validated as criminal activity.

What may seem on the surface as criminal to you may not in fact be deemed unlawful under state law or county ordinance.

Not a week passes by that we do not hear the public's outcry regarding the perception that the laws protect the evil while the innocent person is victimized a second time by the system.

Please do not make matters worse with a quick trigger on the social media keyboard. Don't hurt us by inadvertently helping the very person or persons that you so desperately want to see held accountable for their actions.