



Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit

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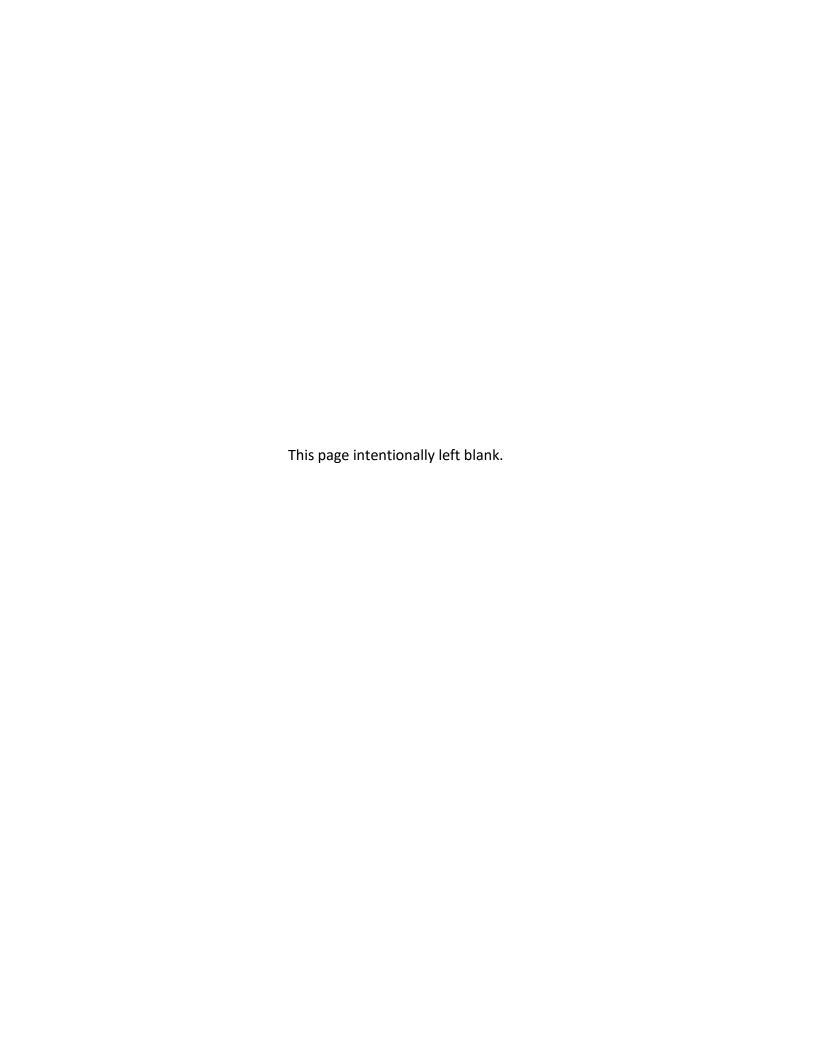


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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) Neighborhood Watch Program. Loudoun County is home to a diverse population residing in a variety of neighborhood types. From large, sweeping farmlands to more densely-populated, classic suburban communities, the LCSO Neighborhood Watch Program provides opportunities for everyone to participate in keeping their home area more secure.

The modern-day version of Neighborhood Watch began in the 1960s in response to an increase in residential burglaries. In 1972, the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) sought to make Neighborhood Watch a nationwide program. In Loudoun County, the LCSO encourages all citizens to learn more about this collaborative effort to keep our local crime rates low.

Neighborhood Watch is a community-oriented crime prevention program that calls for citizens to become more situationally aware and watch out for their neighbors and their community. The program promotes a partnership between citizens, community leaders, and local law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies cannot function effectively without the assistance of residents. The LCSO depends on citizens to remain vigilant and call and report suspicious activities. The Neighborhood Watch Program provides the framework for citizens to participate in preventing criminal activities and enabling a faster response by deputies.

In its essence, Neighborhood Watch serves as an extra set of "eyes and ears" for the LCSO throughout the county. It is designed to assist with prevention, detection, and reporting of criminal behavior and suspicious activities. Studies have shown that active, well-tended neighborhoods with engaged, watchful community members are a less-desirable location for criminal behavior.

Important note: While members of Neighborhood Watch take an active role in observing and reporting suspicious and criminal activity, enforcement action must ALWAYS be left to the LCSO. Under NO circumstances should a citizen attempt to intervene, detain, or arrest any individual as part of their Neighborhood Watch duties.

Overview

Neighborhood Watch is intended to affect and deter crime in a designated area. The goal is to effectively diminish the possibility of criminal activity by engaging citizens in partnership with local law enforcement to act as additional *eyes and ears* in the communities where they live and work. This partnership helps to foster a strong community relationship between law enforcement, citizens, and the community as a whole. It enables the LCSO to provide more effective public safety services.

Through Neighborhood Watch, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office works with community members to facilitate a positive relationship, with a foundation built on trust and communication that will breed a sense of ownership within the community and renew interest in our neighborhoods. Through this relationship, the citizen will be become better informed and educated, ultimately becoming the first line of defense against crime within a community.

Neighborhood Watch Objectives

- Develop strong relationships between citizens based on trust, communication, and a collective sense of partnership and pride.
- Provide a system of information exchange to ensure community safety.
- Educate citizens on how to help prevent acts of criminal activity.
- Provide resources to citizens and community members to deter criminal activity.
- Increase public awareness of data and trends related to criminal activities in the community.

Getting Started

One of the most frequent questions posed by citizens is, "How do I start a Neighborhood Watch?" This question is answered very simply: "When do you want to start?"

Neighborhood Watch is intended to bring neighbors together who have an interest in their community. A neighborhood watch group is meant to be relative in size to the community or neighborhood. It is preferred that watches are confined to a particular neighborhood to develop a closer relationship with persons in that geographical area. This geographical continuity is especially important since people who live and frequent an area regularly tend to know it best and will readily recognize suspicious activity or behaviors.

Watch groups can be formed around a variety of community and neighborhood types. From suburban to rural, large to small neighborhoods, apartments, townhomes, and single-family homes, a Neighborhood Watch can be created anywhere. Also, anyone who lives in a community can join. There is no age limit, and it does not matter whether a person owns or rents in the neighborhood.

The first step is to simply talk with your neighbors to see who is interested in joining your neighborhood watch. The greater the involvement of your neighbors, the greater the prospects of success. Reach out to potential members through a variety of means including, but not limited to:

- Posting messages on community and/or HOA message boards
- Using social media (e.g., Nextdoor, Facebook, Twitter)
- Posting flyers in your neighborhood
- Going door-to-door

Consider specifically seeking out potential members who do not work typical "9 to 5" jobs. Retirees, stay at home parents, and people who work from home are excellent additions to neighborhood watches. Having members with a variety of personal schedules enables your group to have a continual presence in the neighborhood while other members are at work.

Remember, not everyone in your neighborhood may be interested in joining a neighborhood watch; nevertheless, it is still important to make an effort to get as many people involved as possible.

Start-Up Meeting

After your neighbors have shown an interest in forming a Neighborhood Watch, a meeting should

be organized. This meeting can be informal or formal, in-person or virtual, but all potential watch members should be present to discuss potential ways forward. Topics should include what type of Neighborhood Watch the community should have, how members will contribute to the group, and what roles people will play. These topics are discussed in greater detail in the sections below.

Types of Neighborhood Watch Activities

A Neighborhood Watch can come in many forms. The one we prefer to use here in Loudoun County, which is commonly used across the country, is known as the "Passive Observation Model." Under this model, watch members do not conduct "formal" foot or vehicle patrols. Instead, members simply maintain awareness of what is going on in their neighborhood through passive observation during their normal day-to-day activities. This model works extremely well in our communities because it takes no special effort for any citizen to perform the act of "watching" their community. This model is also very appealing because any citizen can do it, and year-round regardless of the weather.

This model also prevents any targeting of Neighborhood Watch members and makes would-be criminals very nervous since they will have no idea who called law enforcement about their activity.

Just because your Neighborhood Watch may not conduct "formal" patrols does not mean that members are not actively watching. Consider "passive" patrolling as something done while you go about your daily activities. Whether it is walking your dog, taking a bike ride, jogging through the neighborhood, or coming and going from home, members can keep an eye out for suspicious or criminal activities. Consider taking short drives through your neighborhood when you leave or come home from work or running errands. Take alternative routes through your neighborhood so that you become more familiar with your surroundings and the vehicles and people that are normally around.

Neighborhood Watch Roles and Responsibilities

Each community in Loudoun County is going to be different, and there is no "one size fits all" approach to organizing and maintaining a Neighborhood Watch. While 100% participation in the community is ideal, it is understood that this may be a difficult objective to achieve. Some Neighborhood Watch groups may only be made up of a few members while other Neighborhood Watches may have a membership numbering in the dozens. In larger Neighborhood Watch groups, there may be a need for several volunteers to help with the workload involved in running the program.

These are the basic roles within a Neighborhood Watch:

• Community Coordinator



- Block/Street Captain (optional)
- Watch Member

With the implementation of newer technologies and forms of communication, the central position within Neighborhood Watch, the Community Coordinator, has become easier. In most circumstances, the duties are easily accomplished with a few emails, texts, or online posts. However, there are times when the size of the community is such that additional assistance may be necessary. Below is a breakdown of those positions and a general overview of their associated duties. Again, this is only a basic guide, and the duties and positions are subject to modification by the community to best suit the needs of the program.

Community Coordinator

The Community Coordinator serves as the Neighborhood Watch's liaison with the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office. The coordinator is responsible for disseminating information from law enforcement to watch members. Additional responsibilities include:

- Providing documentation to the LCSO Crime Prevention Unit.
- Notifying the LSCO Crime Prevention Unit of specific needs (e.g., resources, training, assistance) for the Neighborhood Watch.
- Presiding over Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- Maintaining a master list of contact information for all watch members.
- Coordinating watch activities with Block/Street Captains.
- Maintaining communication with the broader community as a whole (e.g., non-Neighborhood Watch members, HOA, local businesses, etc).
- Ensuring Block/Street Captains remain engaged with their areas.

This position should be decided upon during the initial kick-off meeting. The Community Coordinator will be responsible for contacting the LCSO Crime Prevention Unit following the meeting to register the Neighborhood Watch and provide the required start-up paperwork, including Coordinator Form and the Hold Harmless Waivers signed by all new members. Copies of these forms can be found in this guide's appendix.

If appropriate, an Assistant Community Coordinator position can also be created to assist the Community Coordinator.

Block/Street Captain

Depending upon its size, Neighborhood Watch groups have the option of creating an additional position (or positions) to assist the Community Coordinator. The position of Block/Street Captain can be assigned to one person on each block or street. The roles of this person include:



- Serving as the liaison between the Community Coordinator and the other watch members on their block or street.
- Assisting the Community Coordinator in planning and conducting activities.
- Maintaining a contact list of watch members on each block or street.
- Ensuring watch members in their areas remain engaged through regular communication.

Watch Member

The individual watch member makes up the foundation of each Neighborhood Watch group. They are key to ensuring that the organization is successful and communities are secure. The roles of the watch member include:

- Actively participate in the Neighborhood Watch and keep an eye out for his/her neighbors and community.
- Notify the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office if he/she observes any suspicious persons or vehicles, or criminal behavior.
- Share information with his/her Block/Street Captain or Community Coordinator.
- Attend meetings and training opportunities if applicable.

LCSO Roles and Responsibilities

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office provides the overall structure, guidance, and leadership to maintain a viable Neighborhood Watch Program. The Program is coordinated by staff within the Operational Support Division.

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Unit

The Crime Prevention Unit is the main point of contact for the individual Neighborhood Watches. The extent to which the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office is actively involved in the Neighborhood Watch Programs depends upon the availability of manpower and program resources. The typical responsibilities of the Crime Prevention Unit are to:

- Maintain an updated record of all Loudoun County Neighborhood Watch groups and conduct an annual audit of the entire program.
- Maintain contact with individual Community Coordinators.
- Assist neighborhood watch groups in addressing ongoing issues by reaching out to other law enforcement resources as applicable (e.g., Community Resource Officers, School Resource Officers, Traffic Units, and Station Commands).
- Assist in disseminating information regarding crime trends and patterns in Loudoun County communities.
- Assist in disseminating crime awareness training, including in-person and/or online training, to Neighborhood Watch groups.

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Stations

The four Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Stations are located in Sterling, Ashburn, South Riding, and Round Hill. Each of those offices serves the citizens in those locations by providing staff familiar with the area, culture, and crime patterns. These staff members include Community Resource deputies who work directly with citizens, Home Owner Associations, and businesses to help address ongoing, pervasive issues that affect the overall quality of life. These same Community Resource deputies assist the LCSO Crime Prevention Unit with the delivery of educational material and guidance related to Neighborhood Watch programs.

There are times when a Neighborhood Watch identifies problems that cannot be fixed with a single phone call but will require a more strategic approach. For those types of concerns, the local station should be contacted for assistance. A list of stations and their phone numbers are included in the Appendix of this document.

A map with the service areas can be found at: https://sheriff.loudoun.gov/4571/Find-My-Station

Reporting Suspicious Activities

While the main purpose of a Neighborhood Watch is to serve as an extra set of *eyes and ears* in observing and reporting potential crimes, all enforcement actions must remain the responsibility of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office. At no time shall any member of a Neighborhood Watch attempt to intervene in a situation or investigate a potential crime.

What types of incidents should participants in a Neighborhood Watch report? Some residents fail to call the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office simply because they are not aware that some seemingly innocent activities could be considered suspicious. Others may recognize suspicious activity but be hesitant to call for fear of being thought of as the neighborhood "busy-body" or the "nosey neighbor." Others may simply assume that someone else will call in the incident.

What activities or persons are suspicious? Generally, anything that seems out of the ordinary for your area or for the time of day may signal criminal activity. While by no means comprehensive, below are examples of things that could be considered suspicious and therefore, worth reporting.

Suspicious Persons

- A stranger hanging around your neighbor's home or property when no one is around.
- Screaming or shouting that may signal a fight, robbery, assault, etc.
- Someone offering merchandise at extremely low prices could mean the property is stolen.
- Persons removing car parts, license plates, or gasoline from an unattended vehicle.
- Someone looking into parked cars or going from car to car checking the door handles.
- Persons entering or leaving a business place after hours.
- The sound of breaking glass or other loud explosive noises could mean an accident, break-in, or vandalism.
- Persons loitering around closed schools, parks, or in secluded areas in the neighborhood.
- Persons claiming to be representatives of utilities (gas, phone, cable, etc.), but who are not in uniform, not displaying company identification, and who do not have a solicitor's permit.
- Persons exhibiting unusual mental or physical behavior may be injured, under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, or in need of psychiatric help.

Suspicious Vehicles

- Any vehicle without lights on at night, cruising slowly, or following a course that seems aimless or repetitive.
- Parked, occupied vehicles without their lights on.
- Parked vehicles being loaded with items at a closed business or residence where the occupants are away.



- Persons appearing to be forced into vehicles.
- An unfamiliar or damaged vehicle that appears to be abandoned in a neighborhood.

Other Suspicious Activities

- On-going vehicle "repair" operations at a non-business location (potential "chop shop").
- Open or broken windows and doors at a home or business.
- Gunshots, screaming, the sounds of a fight, persons chasing others on foot or in cars, the
 unusual barking of dogs anything suggesting foul play, danger, disturbance of the peace, or
 other criminal activity.

What Happens When You Call the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

While some, if not all, of the suspicious circumstances described above could have logical and legitimate explanations, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office would rather investigate a potential criminal situation and determine if there's a legitimate answer than not be called at all. Please call in any suspicious activity so we can assess the situation.

All calls to the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office are prioritized according to the seriousness of the situation, not according to the order they are received. If you call the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, please be prepared to provide as much of the following information as possible:

- What are you reporting?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Are there injuries?
- Vehicle description including license number, make and model, color.
- Suspect description, including race, sex, age, height, weight, hair, eyes, facial hair, clothing, and any other identifying characteristics.
- Direction of travel, whether by vehicle or on foot (street and direction)
- Weapons involved (gun, knife, bats, etc.), if any
- Where are you calling from?

While it may seem like you are being asked many questions, the information is for the safety of the responding LCSO deputies and/or rescue personnel. The dispatcher is attempting to gather as much information about the situation as possible so that the deputies will have a clearer picture of what they may encounter when they arrive. Please, remain calm and cooperate with the dispatcher. It is also essential that you only call from a safe and secure location. Remember,

you are not being asked to directly intervene in any situation. You are only being asked to provide information on what you see or hear.

For easy reference, please see the "Suspicious Person Worksheet" and "Suspicious Vehicle Worksheet" in the Appendix. Print a copy out or save it to your phone to use when reporting an incident.

Online/Non-Emergency Reporting

While any emergency such as a crime in progress or threat to life should be reported immediately by calling (or texting) 9-1-1, the following non-emergency incidents can be reported to the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office non-emergency phone number (703-777-1021) or online (Sheriff.Loudoun.Gov/ReportOnline):

- Credit Card Fraud
- Frauds/Scams
- Harassing Phone Calls or Emails
- Identity Theft
- Larceny/Theft
- Theft from Motor Vehicle
- Suspicious Circumstances
- Vandalism
- Vehicle Tampering



Reporting with Smartphone Apps

Citizens can also report non-emergency incidents or crimes using the LCSO Mobile App. It is free at Google Play and the Apple App Store:



Additionally, if anonymity is important and the incident is related to a public school or its students, the LCSO Safe2Talk App can be utilized. It is free at Google Play and the Apple App Store:



Ongoing Commitment

The Loudoun County Neighborhood Watch program can only be successful with the active participation of its citizens.

It is essential that Community Coordinators maintain regular contact with their Block/Street Captains to ensure they remain active. At the same time, Block/Street Captains must ensure the watch members in their area are continuing to participate.

Neighborhood Watch groups may wish to consider expanding their activities. Many additional things watch groups can do to improve the quality of life in a neighborhood, includes hosting events such as neighborhood clean-ups, garage sales, community picnics, or block parties. These types of events help promote togetherness and increase a sense of community. You may also help those in your community who are less able by shoveling snow, raking leaves, or cutting their lawn.

The LCSO Crime Prevention Unit will also reach out to Neighborhood Watch groups throughout the year. At a minimum, an annual audit will be conducted to ensure that each neighborhood watch group is on track and still participating. Also, the LCSO Crime Prevention Unit will be disseminating training and information, with a renewed focus on online platforms, to maintain the members' interest in crime prevention.

If at any time a Neighborhood Watch group fails to meet the requirements and standards set forth by the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, they will be removed as active participants in the program. If a Neighborhood Watch voluntarily decides to disband, the Community Coordinator shall notify the LCSO Crime Prevention Unit.

Additional Resources

Below is a list of resources that are useful for Neighborhood Watch groups.

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Website (http://sheriff.loudoun.gov)

- Report non-emergency crimes online.
- Report traffic complaints.
- Register your home alarm system with the False Alarm Reduction Unit.
- Contact the Crime Prevention Unit for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) security surveys for your home residence or business or request training classes.
- Obtain daily incident reports on incidents in Loudoun County.
- Obtain quarterly significant incident reports and quarterly presentations given by LCSO.

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Social Media (@loudounsheriff)

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Nextdoor

Alert Loudoun (https://www.loudoun.gov/alert)

Alert Loudoun is the notification system Loudoun County uses to send citizens emergency information, news releases, traffic information, weather alerts, and more.

City Protect (https://www.cityprotect.com)

City Protect is an online mapping and analysis service that allows members of the public to view police data in a high-impact map or summary format. Users can also sign up for free email alerts based on user-defined parameters.

Nextdoor (https://nextdoor.com)

Send alerts and post messages to your community about ongoing issues and activities in your neighborhood. Neighborhood Watch groups can create their own groups online.

Neighbors (by Ring) App

The Neighbors by Ring app allows users to view videos from citizen-owned security cameras and post crime or safety issues in your immediate area. Users do not have to own a Ring camera to sign up for the app. The app is available free through Google Play and the Apple App Store.

Appendices

Important Phone Numbers

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office			
Emergency	9-1-1		
Non-Emergency 24-hour response	703-777-1021		
Headquarters	703-777-0407		
Stations			
Ashburn Station	571-258-3000		
Dulles South Station	571-258-3200		
Eastern Loudoun Station	571-258-3356		
Western Loudoun Station	571-258-3750		
Narcotics Tip Line	703-779-0552		
Loudoun County Crime Solvers	703-777-1919		
Criminal Investigations Division	703-777-0475		
Civil Enforcement Unit	703-777-0379		
Adult Detention Center	703-777-0405		
Records Division	703-777-0629		
Property Division	703-777-0610		
Other Nearby Law E	nforcement Agencies		
Leesburg Police Department	703-771-4500		
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority	703-572-2400		
Middleburg Police Department	540-687-6633		
Purcellville Police Department	540-338-7422		
Virginia State Police	703-771-2533		
Other Loudoun County Government Agencies			
Animal Services	703-777-0406		
Family Services (APS, CPS, etc.)	703-777-0353		
Health Department	703-777-0236		
Parks, Recreation, & Community Services	703-777-0343		
Zoning Administration	703-777-0397		

Hold Harmless Waiver

•	Neighborhood Watch Program shall comple ommunity Coordinator to the LCSO Crime I ntion@Loudoun.Gov.	
Loudoun County, his Cor persons that may of	, hereby agree to the proof of the pro	ry, loss, or damage to property od Watch activities. I recognize
-	pating in the Neighborhood Watch Programority, either from the Sheriff of Loudour or any other entity.	
Furthermore, I unders	and, and agree to abide by the Neighb tand that I am not to attempt to detain or edures and guidelines are grounds for disr Program.	arrest any individual. Failure to
Signature:		
Printed Name:		Date://
Contact Email:		Phone:
Witness Signature:		
Printed Name:		Date://

Neighborhood Watch Coordinator Form

This form is to be completed by the Community Coordinator at the formation of the Neighborhood Watch group. It shall be submitted by email to the LCSO Crime Prevention Unit at Sheriffs_Crime_Prevention@Loudoun.gov.

Watch Group Basic Information			
Today'	's Date://	Watch Start Date:	//
Watch Group	Watch Group Name: # of Watch Members:		Members:
Type of (circle all that		Vehicle Patrol	Foot Patrol
Frequency of P Meetings (circ	Manthiy	Quarterly	Annually
Do you have contact	information for all of your Watcl Members? (circle one		No
Number	of single family-homes within yo	our watch area:	
	Number of townhomes within yo	our watch area:	
	Number of apartments within yo	our watch area:	
Community Coordinator Information			
Name:			
Address:			
Home Phone #:		Work Phone #:	
Cell Phone #:		Email:	
Secondary Point of Conduct (if applicable)			
Name:			
Address:			
Home Phone #:		Work Phone #:	
Cell Phone #:		Email:	

Suspicious Person Worksheet

SEX:AGE	: HEIGHT:	WEIGHT:BUILD:
HAIR COLOR:		HAT COLOR/STYLE:
HAIR LENGTH/STYLE:		COAT COLOR/STYLE:
EYE COLOR:	30 1	SHIRT COLOR/STYLE:
FACIAL HAIR:		PANTS COLOR/STYLE:
TATTOOS/SCARS/MARKS:	P 18	DRESS OR SKIRT COLOR:
GLASSES:	4 /	SHOES COLOR/STYLE:
VOICE/ACCENT:		JEWELRY:
OTHER OBSERVATIONS:		
WITNESS/VICTIM NAME:		_ DATE: TIME:

Suspicious Vehicle Worksheet

TYPE OF VEHICLE:

SEDAN	PICK-UP	SUV	VAN	OTHER
COLOR:	TAG STATE:	TAG NUMBE	R: S	TYLE:
MAKE:	MODEL:	NUMBER OF DOORS:	NUMBER OF O	CCUPANTS:
DENTS/STICKE	RS/MARKINGS:			
DIRECTION OF	TRAVEL:			
OTHER OBSERV	/ATIONS:			
		<u> </u>		
WITNESS /VICT	INA NIAME	DATE:	-	ME:

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