

Oklahoma City Crime Trends

On May 30, 2019, the Oklahoma City Police Department (OCPD) and the Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma presented a two-hour briefing on Crime Trends. While the concentration of the effort was for the NW 23rd St and Pennsylvania Ave area, the meeting was message by the OCPD to the citizens of the Oklahoma City area to be vigilant and report known or suspicious activity.

The Police Department alone will not solve or prevent crime.

The OCPD uniform division covers 620 square miles. The uniform division is separated into specialized units. The two numbers for calling the police are 911 and (405) 231-2121. In both cases, the number is sent to the same dispatch center. The only difference between the two numbers is in a high call volume, the non-emergency number will be placed on hold. It is a good idea to have the non-emergency line on your phone in case you are away from the area and need to contact the OCPD. When you call, the individual at the call center is only receiving calls and taking information. If the call is an emergency, the call is being dispatched while you are still on the line. If a formal report is necessary, the individual at the call center will not be the person taking the report. Stay on the line if necessary. Only provide the specific information. The critical information is:

- Nature of your call
- Location
- Detailed description of the event and if someone needs assistance
- Answer any Questions

With the cooperation of the people of Oklahoma City, the Police Department wants to unite efforts in the area to approach crime. There is currently a mindset of fear and complacency preventing people from calling 911 in a real or suspected event. An alarming statistic is an estimated 30% of criminal activity in the Oklahoma City area goes unreported. It is a fact as the number of 911 calls goes up in a particular area, the amount of crime in the area reduces. It follows the criminals do not want to be where the police are. By placing additional calls for suspicious activity, the increased call volume also helps to justify more police officers in the area.

In our Hefner Division, the OCPD created two Violent, Incident, Prevention, Enforcement and Response (VIPER) zones. The VIPER zones are the areas where the highest occurrence of criminal activity is reported. The concentrated areas are where the majority of the patrol are concentrated. That is...majority. The rest of the Hefner Division does not go unwatched. Patrols are continuously on duty and will be immediately provisioned based on priority. Fortunately, Glenhurst is not in a VIPER zone.

One of the main topics of the briefing was Intelligence Led Policing. The goal is to invest time to research and correlate information concerning ALL of the police reports and calls. In many cases, a crime is not a singular event in time at a singular location. If there are reports of suspicious vehicle (non-criminal) in a one area and then a theft happens nearby, there may be a correlation of the events that would lead the police to investigate the vehicle as part of the theft. Without someone reporting the vehicle would have left a critical piece of evidence that would have otherwise gone unreported/unnoticed. In another example provided, the police were in pursuit of a criminal who eluded them in a neighborhood. The unreported suspicious activity was dogs were barking and individuals didn't report that it sounded like someone jumped a fence. The noise was later attributed to

wind. Had the police received the call on the suspicious activity, they may have been able to apprehend the criminal.

Citizens solve crime. Police hold the suspect accountable for their actions.

A number of statistics were presented on the times and day of week for criminal activity. In the residential neighborhoods, the slight increase is on Friday and Saturday. The reason for this is because the criminals are watching the houses and look for indicators of families on vacation. There is also a higher percentage of criminal activity during the day than the evening. Seeing construction and repair type vehicles around during the day is not unusual. However, they use these vehicles to mask the fact that the residents of the house are at work. In the evening, the criminals search for easy targets such as car doors open, garage doors open, and houses that are unlocked.

What can the neighborhoods do to help prevent crime? Master Sargent Robert Skala of the Hefner Division provided a recap of another briefing he does on, "Criminal Prevention through Environmental Design." It is easier to maintain your home than it is to reclaim stolen property. Here are a few key areas for Home Owner Associations to concentrate on in their neighborhoods:

Lighting: Report all inoperative street lights to the Action Center of OKC. They are now replacing the street lights with LED. In the absence of street lights, have all of the residents turn on their porch and/or garage lights.

House Maintenance: Provide "Territorial Reinforcement Maintenance." Make the house lived in and cared for. Criminals like overgrown vegetation. Trim the plants to prevent blind spots that the criminals can use as cover. Trim tree canopies at least 6 feet off of the ground. Make sure the door and window locks are secure and working properly. Report houses that are unruly to the Action Center of OKC...not the OCPD.

Valuables: Do not store valuables, (i.e. wallets, computers, weapons), in your car parked in the driveway overnight.

Garage Doors: Gaps in the bottom of the garage door for ventilation are enough to easily break into the garage. Do not keep a garage door opener in your car overnight. If the criminal breaks into your car, they simply open the garage door for easy access. For those individuals who have a home-link remote on their visor/mirror, lock or disable the garage door from opening.

Neighbors: Get to know your neighbors. If you are going on vacation or having someone do a repair at your home, let you neighbors know. If you see activity at a neighbor's house, call them to make sure they are at home. Don't just watch someone carry large boxes out of a house without making sure it is intended.

Social Media: The OCPD does monitor social media, such as Nextdoor. However, Nextdoor is not a formal report. Call 911 about suspicious or know activity before posting it to Nextdoor.

When was the last time you saw the Fire Department patrolling for fires?

The call for action from the OCPD is for the citizens to take responsibility to participate to thwart criminal activity in the area. If you see something suspicious or criminal, call 911! Get the OCPD to the scene to investigate. Create the data and reports the OCPD needs to perform Intelligence Led Investigation. Take responsibility for the neighborhoods you live in by removing opportunity for crime. And finally, hold the OCPD accountable for the critical job they are doing for our community.