Guide to Calling the Police on Shabbos and Yom Tov

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GENERAL RULES

- If someone's life is in danger or there is even just a possibility that his life could be in danger, one must act quickly and decisively to keep that person safe.
- If someone will incur a monetary loss or it is likely that he will incur a monetary loss, one should involve a non-Jew to prevent that loss, subject to the conditions explained below.

I. Before or During a Crime

A. If one observes a situation (potential crime) where there is even just a possibility that someone could be harmed, one should call the police (for example, if one sees someone being robbed or mugged).

B. If one is certain that no one will be harmed, but it is likely that a monetary loss will occur, one should ask a non-Jew to call the police (for example, if one sees an individual looking into cars in a suspicious manner).

C. Even though preventing a loss of money or property does not justify one to personally call the police, nevertheless if there is a possibility that the situation could result in personal harm, one should call the police (for example, if someone is attempting to break into a home that may be occupied).

II. After a Crime has Occurred

A. If a crime has recently occurred and one has information that may lead to the apprehension of the perpetrator, one should ask a non-Jew to call the police (for example, if one has the license plate number or the description of the perpetrator).

B. If a crime has recently occurred and there is reason to believe that if the police are called, the perpetrator might be prevented from committing another crime (e.g. either because the police might catch the perpetrator or because a heightened state of alert might prevent him from committing another crime), one should ask a non-Jew to call the police (for example, someone's house has recently been burglarized).

C. If enough time has passed since the crime occurred that the perpetrator is probably out of the area, one may not ask a non-Jew to call the police (for example, if one wakes up in the morning and finds the window of their car smashed). However, one may mention the incident to a non-Jewish neighbor and if that neighbor chooses to notify the police, it is his prerogative.

D. In all of these situations, when the police arrive, one should answer all of the questions he is asked, in detail, even though the police are writing every word being said.

The community is fortunate to have a police department that endeavors to keep us safe 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even assigning additional patrols for Yom Tov and other days when needed. Also, they make every effort to better understand what we may or may not do on Shabbos and Yom Tov so that they can assist us in the best possible way. May this good relationship continue and may Hashem grant us a safe neighborhood.

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