



news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COUNTY POLICE ACCEPTING PHOTO, VIDEO & TEXT MESSAGE TIPS AT

TIPS@WCCOPS.COM

New system is for tips and visual images only, not for emergency use

If you see something, send something.

The Westchester County Department of Public Safety is now accepting non-emergency text messages, emails, photographs and short video clips from people with information or visual images of crimes or suspicious activity.

By sending a text message or email to TIPS@WCCOPS.COM, the public has a new way to share valuable information with the police, County Executive Andy Spano said. The messages will be received at county police headquarters in Hawthorne and will be reviewed by detectives.

"We are always focused on finding new ways to keep Westchester residents safe," Spano said. "Using technology in creative and cost-effective ways continues to help us meet that goal."

Public Safety Commissioner Thomas Belfiore stressed that the text message system should not be used to report an emergency or to summon help.

"When there is a crime in progress or other emergency, people should always dial 911," Belfiore said. People who send a message to TIPS@WCCOPS.COM will receive an automatic reply reminding them to call 911 if there is an actual emergency.

Belfiore said that photos and video captured on cell phone cameras have helped police to solve crimes in the past. TIPS@WCCOPS.COM will enable police to receive these more promptly and even anonymously.

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The text message system provides another way for the public to partner with police to protect their communities, Belfiore said. In particular, he said, texting and video are popular among teens and young adults – two groups that are often less comfortable making a phone call to police hotlines to share tips and other information.

“Many people today are walking around with a sophisticated cell phone or other device that can send text messages and emails, or take video or still photos. That device, among other things, can be a useful crime-fighting tool if people see suspicious or criminal activity and can safely capture it.”

Belfiore stressed that no one should ever put themselves at risk to capture such photos or video.

Tips will be forwarded to or shared with municipal police agencies in Westchester in the appropriate cases, Belfiore said.

In addition to emails and text messages, tips can also be provided by calling the county police hotline at 914-741-4334.

Note: A 2-minute video “dramatization” showing the tips program at work is available on request.