

DPS: Texans Can Help Fight Crime, Terrorism Through Tips to State Website

AUSTIN – The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) is reminding Texans to remain vigilant with respect to potential crime and terrorist activity in their communities, and to report suspicious behaviors to the department's iWATCH website at www.iwatchtx.org. The iWATCH program was created as a partnership between communities and law enforcement, and utilizes citizen-sourced tips related to criminal activity.

"In the wake of the terrible tragedies in Paris, we are reminding Texans of the important role they can play in helping law enforcement combat those intending to do harm to others," said DPS Director Steven McCraw. "Texas faces the gamut of threats to public safety from organized crime to potential terroristic plots, and DPS works around-the-clock with our local, state and federal partners to keep our residents safe. Because truly effective crime fighting depends on a united effort between law enforcement and the public, we urge Texans to always be watchful, and report to iWATCH or their local authorities any illegal or suspicious activities they witness."

In addition to the attacks in Paris, France, senseless attacks have also occurred closer to home in recent years, including tragic shootings at Fort Hood, and a shooting incident in May of this year in Garland, Texas. Concerned citizens can visit the website to fill out a report, which includes contact information and specifics about a particular incident. A report usually takes fewer than five minutes to complete, and once submitted,

each report is reviewed by law enforcement analysts. The website also lists a phone number for possible anonymous reports.

Here are some examples of behaviors and activities to report:

- Strangers asking questions about building security features and procedures.
- Briefcase, suitcase, backpack or package is left behind.
- Cars or trucks are left in no-parking zones at important buildings.
- Chemical smells or fumes that are unusual for the location.
- People requesting sensitive information, such as blueprints, security plans or VIP travel schedules, without a need to know.
- Purchasing supplies that could be used to make bombs or weapons, or purchasing uniforms without having the proper credentials.
- Taking photographs or videos of security features, such as cameras or checkpoints.

DPS urges residents who see something unusual to simply speak up. Preparations for terrorist attacks may often be seen, but rarely reported. When in doubt, report the suspicious activity through iWATCH. For more information on the iWATCH program or to submit a report, visit www.iwatchtx.org. To make an anonymous report, individuals can contact DPS at 1-866-786-5972. (*iWATCH is not designed to report emergencies. If a situation requires an emergency response, call 911.*)

Reports to iWATCH can also

be made through the DPS Mobile App. The app is currently available for iPhone users on the Apple App Store: (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/texas-dps/id902092368?mt=8>) and for Android users on Google Play: (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tx.dps&hl=en>).

The iWATCH website is part of the DPS Intelligence and Counterterrorism Division (ICT), which serves as the central clearinghouse for the collection, management, analysis and dissemination of law enforcement and homeland security intelligence in Texas. This DPS intelligence strategy is essential to proactive, preventive and effective law enforcement operations to combat crime and terrorism.

The intelligence strategy encompasses a variety of other programs, including the multi-agency Texas Joint Crime Information Center, which provides around-the-clock analytical assistance to more than 1,500 local law enforcement agencies; Counterterrorism Analysis Program; State Intelligence Assessment Program; Texas 10 Most Wanted Fugitive and Sex Offender programs; Operation Drawbridge border camera program; Missing and Exploited Children Unit; Interdiction for the Protection of Children Program; Gang Analysis Section; and Critical Infrastructure and Key Resource Tracking and Assessment Program. ICT also offers direct case support for Texas Rangers, and assistance in investigations involving cartel, gangs, human trafficking and sex offenders.

