

How to Report a Crime to Victoria Police When Your Local Police Station's Public Counter (Watch House) Is Closed

If you need to report a crime or incident to Victoria Police, a closed public counter at your local police station does not mean the matter cannot be reported. It may change the method of reporting, but it does not prevent or end the reporting process.

The first and most important consideration must always be the immediate safety of yourself and others.

1. In an Emergency, Call Triple Zero (000)

Call Triple Zero (000) immediately when:

- a. A crime is happening now.
- b. The offender is still present or nearby.
- c. Someone is in immediate danger.
- d. A person has been seriously injured or threatened.
- e. There is a serious threat to a person or property.
- f. The situation is escalating or becoming more dangerous; or
- g. Urgent police attendance is required.

Do not travel to a police station when immediate emergency assistance is required. Where it is safe to do so, move to a secure location, avoid confronting or approaching the offender, and call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

2. Check the Police Station's Public Counter Hours

Before visiting a police station, check its current:

- a. Public counter opening hours.
- b. Address.
- c. Telephone number; and
- d. Available services.

Police station counter hours vary. Some police stations may operate a 24 hour public counter, while others may have limited or changing counter hours.

To check the current public counter or watch house opening hours for your local police station, visit: www.police.vic.gov.au/police-station-location

3. When the Public Counter Is Open

Enter the police station and proceed to the public counter.

Wait at the public counter until a police officer, reservist or authorised staff member approaches you.

(Note: Do not take any firearms, weapons, machetes, knives, ammunition, prohibited items or other dangerous objects into a police station. If you possess such item(s) and intend to surrender or hand them over to the police, telephone the police station first, clearly explain the circumstances, your location, and follow every instruction given to you by police carefully, slowly and precisely).

Explain clearly:

- a. What it is you wish to report.
- b. What happened.
- c. Where and when it happened.
- d. Who was involved.
- e. Whether anyone was injured or threatened.
- f. What property was stolen, lost or damaged.
- g. Whether the offender remains nearby or known to you.
- h. Whether there are any continuing safety concerns; and
- i. What evidence or witness information is available.

Answer all questions accurately and provide any relevant photographs, video or audio recordings, documents, receipts, serial numbers, witness details, or other information relating to the incident or property involved, that you may have.

4. When the Public Counter (Watch House) Is Closed

A closed police station public counter does not necessarily mean that police patrol and emergency response services are not available.

When you arrive at a closed police station:

- a. Look for and follow any instructions displayed at or near the police station front entrance door.
- b. Check for a telephone, intercom, assistance button, notice or directions to another police station.
- c. Do not remain outside waiting indefinitely for assistance.

- d. Assess whether the matter has become urgent or dangerous.
- e. Use the appropriate alternative reporting method as addressed in this checklist.

Another police station may have an open public counter, while police patrol and emergency response services may continue operating throughout the area.

5. Call the Police Assistance Line

For a nonurgent crime or incident that does not require immediate police attendance, call: **131 444**

The Police Assistance Line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It can be used to report eligible nonurgent crimes or incidents after the offender has left and there is no immediate danger.

The Police Assistance Line may also provide information about the appropriate reporting process where the matter cannot be completed through online reporting.

6. Report Eligible Matters Online

Victoria Police provides an official online reporting service for eligible nonurgent crimes and incidents.

You can report online at: **onlinereporting.police.vic.gov.au**

Eligible online reports may include:

- a. Stolen property.
- b. Burglary or break-ins.
- c. Vehicle theft.
- d. Bicycle theft.
- e. Lost property.
- f. Fuel theft.
- g. Theft from a vehicle; and
- h. Property damage, including graffiti or vandalism, etc.

Online reporting is available at any time. However, not every crime or incident is eligible to be reported through the online system.

Do not rely on online reporting where the incident involves: immediate danger, an offence that is still occurring, an offender who is still present or nearby, serious injury or an immediate threat of injury, violence or threats of violence, family violence, sexual offending; or any other serious or urgent circumstances. In these situations, call Triple Zero (000).

7. Attend Another Police Station

Where an in person report is required, identify and attend the nearest police station with an open public counter. Before travelling, confirm:

- a. The station's current public counter opening hours.
- b. The station's address and telephone number.
- c. Whether the station provides the service you require; and
- d. Whether an appointment or other arrangement is necessary before attending.

Search for another station at: www.police.vic.gov.au/police-station-location

8. Gather the Relevant Information

Before reporting a nonurgent crime or incident that does not require immediate police attendance, collect as much accurate and relevant information as reasonably possible. This will assist police to understand the circumstances, assess the matter, record the report efficiently, and determine the most appropriate operational response.

This may include:

- a. The date and time of the crime/incident.
- b. The exact location.
- c. A clear and chronological description of what happened.
- d. Descriptions of the people involved.
- e. Vehicle descriptions and registration numbers, if possible.
- f. The direction in which offender(s) or vehicle(s) travelled.
- g. Witness names and contact details.
- h. Photographs, CCTV recordings or mobile phone footage.
- i. Screenshots, emails, messages or other electronic evidence.
- j. Details of property that was stolen, lost or damaged.
- k. Serial numbers, receipts, photographs or proof of ownership.

- l. Details of keys, identity documents, access cards or electronic devices that were taken.
- m. Information about injuries, threats or continuing risks; and
- n. Details of any previous related incidents.

Preserve all original photographs, video or audio recordings, documents, messages, and other potential evidence. Do not edit, delete, crop, enhance, overwrite, alter, or otherwise modify the original material.

9. Make a Clear and Accurate Report

Provide factual information and, where possible, clearly distinguish between:

- a. What you personally did, saw, heard or experienced.
- b. What another person told you.
- c. What is supported by photographs, recordings, documents or other evidence.
- d. What you believe or suspect may have occurred.
- e. What remains uncertain or unknown; and
- f. The names, descriptions and any known identifying details of the offender or offenders involved.

Do not exaggerate, speculate or include information that you know is incorrect.

Clear and accurate reporting helps police:

- a. Understand the incident.
- b. Assess immediate and continuing risks.
- c. Create an official record.
- d. Identify patterns of offending.
- e. Connect related incidents.
- f. Identify possible offenders.
- g. Recover stolen property; and
- h. Determine what further action may be required.

10. Consider the Wider Risk

An incident that initially appears minor may involve broader personal safety, property, identity, financial or security risks.

This is particularly important where stolen, lost or compromised property includes:

- a. House or vehicle keys.
- b. Identity documents.
- c. Bank cards.
- d. Mobile telephones.
- e. Computers or electronic devices.
- f. Security codes.
- g. Garage door remote controls.
- h. Workplace access cards; or
- i. Information that reveals a person's address or daily routine.

Take reasonable and immediate steps to protect your financial accounts, identity information, property, electronic devices, access credentials and personal safety while the police report is being made and investigated.

11. Remain Calm and Continue the Reporting Process

A closed public counter at a police station may change the reporting pathway, but it does not remove a person's right or ability to report a crime or incident to Victoria Police.

The practical response is to:

1. Assess the immediate risk and take reasonable steps to remain safe.
2. Follow any instructions displayed at or near the police station entrance.
3. Call Triple Zero (000) immediately if the matter is urgent or someone is in danger.
4. Call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 for an eligible nonurgent matter.
5. Use Victoria Police online reporting where the incident is eligible.
6. Attend another police station with an open public counter where an inperson report is required; and
7. Provide police with complete, accurate and relevant information.

Knowing what to do next enables you to respond calmly, protect yourself and others, preserve critical evidence, reduce the risk of further harm, and ensure the incident is promptly brought to the attention of Victoria Police.

Clear and accurate information also assists police to assess the circumstances, properly record your concerns, identify any immediate risks, and determine the most appropriate operational response.

A closed police station public counter does not remove your right or your ability to report a crime.

Stay safe. Act decisively. Preserve all available evidence. Record the date, time and location of the incident, together with descriptions of the people involved, vehicle details, photographs, video footage, witness information and any other relevant material.

Most importantly, ensure the incident is formally reported to Victoria Police through the appropriate reporting channel identified in this checklist.