

Public Comments of Chief Phillip A. Broadfoot, Danville Police Department
March 7, 2017

> There is a mistaken belief among many citizens that police reports simply convey the basic facts of a crime or incident and that no harm, embarrassment or shame can occur if the report is made public.

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> The truth is that officers include in their reports any information relevant to the matter, including their unvarnished observations, hostile statements by family members and unflattering descriptions of the scene.

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> If police reports are allowed to become accessible to anyone, including the victim, the fallout can be significant.

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> Here is a small paraphrased sampling of some of the statements I have read in police reports during my 44 years in law enforcement. I ask you to consider the negative ramifications if this information was available to the victim, the family or to the public through an open records policy.

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> 1. The victim stated he has no home intruder alarm system, despite the brand name sign in the front yard and sticker on the front door.

> 2. The victim's wife was distraught that the thief took all of her diamond jewelry, but the husband told the officer in confidence that they were not real diamonds.

> 3. The alarm company took 22 minutes to report the alarm to 911, a recurring problem with this company.

> 4. The suspect did not trip the burglar alarm because the garage is not alarmed.

> 5. The thief took the two firearms located in the bedroom closet, but missed the more valuable collection hidden behind the cabinet in the garage.

> 6. None of the pistols taken can be entered into NCIC as stolen because the victim did not have any serial numbers recorded.

> 7. Although the mother of the suicide victim says she can't prove it, she strongly suspects her son took his life because her daughter in law was having an affair with the realtor who sold them the home.

> 8. The victim works out of town during the week and only comes home on weekends.

> 9. Because the lab found two unknown DNA profiles in the PERK kit, the victim was asked if she would identify her consensual sex partner for testing to determine which sample belonged to the suspect. She provided the name of

> 10. The victim's 12 year old son said that he thinks the new neighbor's son might have been the thief who took his bicycle.

> 11. The house was in disarray. It was hard to determine what was vandalized and what was normal.

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> The police officer is invited, or in some situations mandated by law, to enter into private homes to investigate crimes and incidents. We assume that awesome responsibility with a healthy respect for individual privacy, knowing that we are being allowed to observe and learn and record the secrets of citizens who trust us to hold that information confidential.

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> We as a nation take pride in the privacy of the individual and place significant limits on government access to private homes and private affairs. Why then, do we entertain the notion that what government discovers once it uses that power to invade the private home can be freely shared with the public at large?

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> Something is wrong with that logic. Government should be open to inspection, but not what government finds or observes in a victim's private home while using its power to investigate police matters.

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> I trust you will always do the right thing and keep police incident reports confidential.

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> Thank you.

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