

## **Concerns regarding confronting suspicious people/vehicles**

### ***From Raven Crime Watch Society***

*Posted April 23, 2018*

At the recent provincial AGM of the Alberta Provincial Rural Crime Watch Association held in Lacombe, a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the RCMP and the APRCWA was introduced and copies handed out to the crime watch societies.

Among several items within the MOU, was a portion dealing with patrols. It was agreed that the RCW groups would take only a passive approach to the patrols being done. Primarily meaning that we are to only observe and report any suspicious activity to the local RCMP detachment.

We encourage all to remain vigilant in what is happening in our communities but to also ensure their own safety as being the most important factor in deciding what actions to take upon observing any criminal or suspicious activity.

-----

### **From the Innisfail RCMP Detachment**

It has come to my attention that some members of the RCW and / or the COP have been engaging in dangerous and borderline unlawful behaviour when it comes to suspicious people and vehicles. I've been told that crime watch members are pursuing suspicious vehicles all over the place, boxing vehicles in and carrying weapons.

This practice needs to stop immediately. Not only are crime watch members putting themselves at risk of injury or death, but they also put themselves at great criminal and civil liability should they be found to be acting in an unlawful manner. I'll provide some hypothetical scenarios:

1. A suspicious vehicle is spotted on RR 43. Crime watch member pulls in behind it and begins to follow it. Vehicle pulls away and starts driving in a dangerous manner. Crime watch member also drives in a dangerous manner to "keep an eye on it." At the very least, the crime watch member could face a charge of careless driving under the Traffic Safety Act.

2. A crime watch member sees a suspicious person in their yard and retrieves their shotgun and points it at the suspicious person, who, as it turns out, was simply lost. The crime watch member can now be charged with pointing a firearm, careless use of a firearm, uttering threats and have all of their guns seized, and firearms license revoked indefinitely.
3. A crime watch member is on patrol in their neighbourhood and spots a suspicious vehicle. They call for assistance from other crime watch members, who proceed to follow the vehicle to a local parking lot and proceed to box the vehicle in. The suspicious vehicle starts to ram the crime watch members vehicles in an effort to escape, causing thousands of dollars worth of damage to the vehicles, notwithstanding putting themselves in unnecessary danger.
4. Same scenario as above, but the suspicious vehicle is meeting a friend and not doing anything wrong. By boxing in the vehicle and not allowing them to leave, the crime watch members are now liable for forcible confinement, which is a very serious criminal offence.

The point I want to drive home is this: People WILL be held accountable for their actions. The function of a crime watch group or citizens on patrol is to OBSERVE and REPORT. Leave the policing to the police. We have the tools, training and skills necessary to investigate crime and apprehend criminals. The very last thing I want to have to do is charge a normally law abiding citizen, or worse, have to tell their loved ones that they've died chasing a criminal.

If there are any questions, feel free to contact me.

Cst. Jeff ERB, Investigator  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Innisfail Detachment  
403-227-3342