

Time and again, police in Atlantic City, Pleasantville and elsewhere are stymied because people refuse to come forward with information that can help solve crimes.

That's a shame for everyone - except the criminals. Police get understandably frustrated when they get no help from the community. And the people in a neighborhood - who quite often know who shot whom and why - only make their lives less safe by giving the criminals free reign.

The people who refuse to report what they know aren't bad folks. They are just afraid. Violence, much of it drug-related, is rampant in some neighborhoods. And they know what happens to people who "snitch" - they endanger themselves and their family members.

But what we find particularly frustrating about this whole situation is that there is a way for people to communicate tips to police anonymously and safely.

The Atlantic County Crime Stoppers group, a member of the national Crime Stoppers USA, has never had any situation in which a tipster's identity was revealed or the tipster was called to court to testify, President Dave Carter says.

Never.

The group operates a tip line that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week (609-652-1234 or 800-658-8477). Callers are assigned a code number; the calls are not recorded; only a law-enforcement coordinator has access to the system. No one asks your name. No one knows your name. And Crime Stoppers even pays a \$1,000 reward for a tip that leads to an arrest and an indictment. (The cash payment is handed out by a third party at a discreet location.)

Even better, the all-volunteer, nonprofit group now operates a year-old website where people can leave tips - [crimestoppersatlantic.com](http://crimestoppersatlantic.com). Again, tipsters are assigned a code number, and Crime Stoppers officials say they don't even know the tipster's IP address.

An additional way to anonymously provide police with information about crimes may soon be available in Atlantic City. The resort is considering joining the tip411 program, which allows anonymous communication between police and the public via text.

Of course, it all comes down to trust. Many believe that the police and Crime Stoppers cannot be trusted to safeguard a tipster's identity. But at some point, if people want to end the cycle of violence in their communities, they are going to have to take that leap of faith. It's either that, or let the criminals win.

Yes, standing up takes courage. But if you have information that can help solve a crime, give Crime Stoppers a try. It's an organization that has earned your trust.

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