



## **Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers, Inc**

### **Operational Procedures**

These procedures set forth an understanding between the Police Department of Beeville, George West, and Three Rivers, the Sheriff's Office of Bee, Goliad, and Live Oak Counties, and Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers concerning Crime Stoppers activities and the Law Enforcement Coordinator's (LEC) responsibilities. The procedures are designed to guide the governing board in the deliberation on all matters pertaining to operations and provide sufficient flexibility in handling unique situations.

### **Crime Stoppers' Telephones**

A cellular telephone account has been activated for the purpose of receiving Crime Stoppers' tip information. The number of the tip line is **361 362-0206**. Long distance is **1 877-362-0206**. Tips can also be made via our webpage, [coastalbendcrimestoppers.com](http://coastalbendcrimestoppers.com),

Telephone number **361 597-0206** is called the status number to be used by tipsters to learn the outcome of their tip, is to be used for Crime Stoppers' business only, and is to be kept free for incoming calls. The Crime Stoppers' telephone shall not be disconnected, or rendered inactive, for any reason without the consent of the board, other than for repair. However, a voice message can be made establishing the time the Law Enforcement Coordinator (LEC) will be available to take calls from tipsters. Another phone, **361 319-0206**, has also been established as a second phone for administrative or LEC purposes as necessary.

### **Handling Incoming Calls**

When a Crime Stoppers' call is received, use the following procedures:

1. Tip calls are forwarded to a Crime Stoppers' Call Center, which will access a Crime Stoppers' software program, to forward the tips to CBCS after assigning a code number to the tipster, and giving them CBCS's status phone number.
  - a. The LEC will check CS software program, daily.
  - b. Tips will be sent to the appropriate law enforcement agency.  
Refer to h and j below.
  
2. When the LEC receives the calls:
  - a. Obtain as much detailed information from the informant as possible.
  - b. Attempt to secure sufficient information from the caller as if one were attempting to qualify the information to secure a search warrant.
  - c. Always bear in mind that ALL informants calling the Crime Stoppers' telephone EXPECT to remain anonymous; therefore, no information, that tends to show or lead to the caller's identity, should be contained in the tip without the caller's express consent.

- d. If an informant asks, or is requested by the coordinator to work directly with an investigator, the coordinator shall: **Advise informant that this can jeopardize their anonymity and information could be revealed in court that might lead to the discovery of his/her identity.**
- e. The informant is only eligible for one reward per criminal episode.
- f. A confidential informant working for a law enforcement agency shall not be automatically eligible for rewards by Crime Stoppers.
- g. After obtaining information from the informant, and if it is determined that the information appears to be pertinent, the LEC is to assign the informant a code number.
- h. After assigning the informant a code number, the informant shall be instructed to identify himself through his/her code in all future contacts with Crime Stoppers.
- i. Informants who appear to have pertinent information should be instructed to re-call Crime Stoppers within twenty-four hours. This allows investigators sufficient time to verify and confirm the information received, or to have the coordinator request additional information on the investigator's behalf. Law Enforcement Officers may ask the LEC to use additional discretion in determining call back dates, as each case may vary.
- j. Information received, pertinent to a law enforcement agency outside of Bee, Goliad, or Live Oak Counties, shall be taken in the manner prescribed within these Operating Procedures and disseminated to the respective agency via the most appropriate method(s) depending upon the circumstances and urgency.

## **Disposition of Information**

1. Once information is received from an informant and a code number is assigned and call back instructions (if any) are given, the LEC shall prepare a Crime Stoppers' tip report. If a Crime Stoppers' software program is used, the information is sent via email within the program, after any information which may identify the tipster is removed. The information is referred to an investigator with the appropriate law enforcement agency as soon as possible, or referred to a supervisor for assignment.
2. The investigating officer assigned to the case shall attempt to clear the case in question, using the information available as a tool to solve the case and/or recover stolen property, or seize narcotics. If during the investigation, the investigator(s) feels that additional information is needed, the investigator should notify the Crime Stoppers' LEC to obtain the additional information. The LEC should request that the informant call back as often as necessary to check case progress, and provide any additional information and/or clarification. The informant's anonymity is always safeguarded.
3. Once an informant's information is developed to a point where arrest and criminal charges are imminent, the Crime Stoppers' LEC is notified, and a disposition report provided in the tip information is completed and returned to the LEC via the Crime Stoppers' software program.
4. When deemed necessary and advisable, informants can be encouraged to communicate directly with the investigator to enhance clarity. Investigators are advised that no attempt is made to obtain the caller's identity. **Callers are advised that disclosure of their identity to the investigator is at their discretion and can jeopardize their anonymity. Information could be revealed in court that might lead to the informant's identity.**

## Rewards

1. Crime Stoppers deals primarily with unsolved offenses and fugitives wanted for felony offenses. Cash reward amounts are discretionary and set by the board of directors. Reward offers can be advertised as:  
CRIME STOPPERS WILL PAY A CASH REWARD OF UP TO \$1000 FOR TIPS PROVIDED TO CRIME STOPPERS WHICH RESULT IN THE ARREST AND/OR FILING OF CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR COMMITTING THE CRIME(S).
2. Under unique circumstances, as determined by the board, where the purpose of Crime Stoppers is best served, the program may handle and pay cash rewards for misdemeanor offenses.
3. Under certain circumstances, as determined by the board, where the purpose of Crime Stoppers is best served, the program may pay rewards to informants working directly with investigators. A specific detailed written request by the investigator or agency head and with the LEC's recommendation is suggested in such cases.
4. Under certain circumstances, as determined by the board, where the purpose of Crime Stoppers is best served, the program may pay rewards to informants where neither an arrest is made, nor felony criminal charges accepted. (e.g. tip leads to large amounts of illegal drugs; tip leads to the discovery of a body (s), extradition issues arise)
5. Reward payments amounts (maximum and minimum) are to be determined exclusively by Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers' Board of Directors with input from the LEC and recommendations as provided by the Crime Stoppers' tip software.

## Reward Eligibility

1. Any person, except those defined below as ineligible, that directly contacts the Crime Stoppers' tip line and gives information which leads to the arrest and/or criminal charges filed against an adult or juvenile, or the arrest of a fugitive wanted for a felony crime, is eligible for a reward.
2. Under unique circumstances, where the purpose of Crime Stoppers is best served, and upon the LEC's specific, detailed request, a reward may be approved by the board and paid to an informant prior to arrest, filing criminal charges, or fugitive apprehension.
3. Under unique circumstances, where the purpose of Crime Stoppers is best served, and upon the specific, detailed request of the LEC, a "reward pre-payment" may be approved by the board and paid to an informant prior to the regular payment date.
4. Under rare circumstances, where the purpose of Crime Stoppers is best served, and has been approved by the board, a reward may be paid to an informant who provides information directly to a law enforcement officer. Examples include situations where the informant was unable to reach Crime Stoppers and the information is of such immediacy that contact was made directly with a law enforcement officer. **The informant must notify the officer that an attempt was made to reach Crime Stoppers.**
5. Under rare circumstances, where the purpose of Crime Stoppers may best be served, a reward may be approved by the board for an informant where no felon's arrest is, or can be made:
  - a. If the informant is instrumental in property recovery, or
  - b. If the informant is instrumental in illegal narcotics recovery, or
  - c. If in the solution of a felony crime, the district attorney feels there is not sufficient evidence to file criminal charges, or criminal charges are dropped by a law

enforcement officer's recommendation, the payment is made based upon the LEC's specific detailed request.

6. The following persons are not eligible for a reward:
  - a. Commissioned law enforcement officer and/or members of their immediate family;
  - b. The crime's perpetrator or co-perpetrator;
  - c. The victim and/or his immediate family;
  - d. The fugitive;
  - e. Law enforcement informants funneled into the program;
  - f. Board members or the members of their immediate family.

If more than one person furnished information about the same crime or fugitive, the cash reward is divided as the board may determine, based primarily upon the information's relative importance.

## Reward Amounts

1. The amount of the offered cash reward is discretionary and set by the board. There is no specified minimum reward.
2. The board determines the amount paid in each case. The reward amount depends on the importance of the information provided, nature of the crime, risk to the informant, and the informant's importance as a regular source, all as the LEC details.
3. The reward paid for information received on selected cases featured in the "Crime of the Week" is paid in the amount advertised, plus an extra \$300.

## Payment Methods

1. The board is responsible for the approved reward payment method and timing. The treasurer or board designee shall make payment. **The LEC or other law enforcement officers assigned to the program should not handle cash rewards or make reward payments.**
2. The procedures for identifying an informant generally include using the informant's code number/word that is assigned at the time payment is confirmed. After following procedures assigned to ensure that the payee is the correct person, the informant is paid in cash to help preserve anonymity.
3. Procedure for reward payment:
  - a. All cases considered for reward payments are to be presented at the monthly meeting of the board.
  - b. The board at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting considers the LEC's recommendations for approval or disapproval.
  - c. Once the reward is approved, and the tipster has contacted the LEC, a check for the approved reward amount is issued payable to the financial institution where the reward fund is maintained. The treasurer, or board designee, will cash the check and place the money in an envelope with the code numbers/word on the outside. The envelope will be taken to Commercial Window of Prosperity Bank on Washington St. in Beeville with instructions to give it to the person who asks for it with the correct numbers/words. The tipster will be given instructions to call the LEC when the reward is retrieved. If it is not retrieved by the end of the working day, the treasurer, or board designee will have to pick up the envelope until further instructions are given by the LEC. If the tipster does not contact the LEC, and does not pick up the envelope within 24 hours, the money will be returned to the Reward Account.

- d. If a reward is unclaimed and is re-deposited in the bank account, the informant must re-contact the LEC and make arrangements for payment.
- e. In most instances, a LEC should not handle cash rewards, or make cash reward payments. However, for good cause, the board may designate the LEC to make the payment in person if necessary.
- b. The LEC will be responsible for coordinating the time and place for reward payment and should guard the identity of the tipster.

## **Law Enforcement Agency- Roles and Responsibilities**

The coordinator is responsible for:

1. Adhering to the policies as set forth by Texas Crime Stoppers and CBCS;
2. Acting as an agent for the board of directors and liaison between the board, law enforcement agency, and media;
3. Processing raw intelligence/tips received on criminal activity on behalf of the board;
4. Giving full discretion and latitude in disseminating tips regarding criminal activity to the most appropriate law enforcement agency;
5. Tracking each Crime Stoppers' tip to conclusion with the corporation of the law enforcement agency who received the tip;
6. Maintaining the Crime Stoppers' software tip program with up to date information on each tip on behalf of the board;
7. Reporting monthly to the board of directors;
8. Coordinating and cooperating with other Crime Stoppers' programs and law enforcement agencies in Texas and elsewhere on Crime Stoppers' tips, and related matters; and
9. Attend 16 hours of training every two years as required for Continued Certification for CBCS. (TCOLE credit)

## **Records**

1. All callers' communications to the Crime Stoppers' hotline regarding reports of criminal activity are accepted by the LEC via Crime Stoppers' software and assigned to personnel on behalf of Crime Stoppers.
2. All records relating to criminal activity reports or tips are the property of Crime Stoppers. Chapter 414, Section 414.009, Texas Government Code will be strictly adhered to regarding the use of said records.
3. The coordinator is responsible for collecting, filing, and securing Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers, Inc. records and subsequent reports and maintaining Crime Stoppers' records separate from the documents and records of the law enforcement agency. The LEC also maintains record custody and control on the board's behalf, until the board authorizes expungement. (CBCS Bylaws: Expunge a tip's record after 180 days, with the exception of homicide tips, or other extenuating circumstances).
4. The LEC shall not be compelled to produce Crime Stoppers' records to testify in court regarding Crime Stoppers' records as a result of subpoena as specified in Chapter 414, Sections 414.008 and 414.009, Texas Government Code.
5. Upon receipt of a subpoena for Crime Stoppers' records or required court appearance to testify about Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers' records, the LEC shall immediately notify the Chief/Sheriff and the Board chairperson for appropriate action.

## **Amendments**

The Board of Directors may amend or suspend any of the foregoing by a two-thirds vote of the members at any regular or special meeting, provided a quorum is present, and all amendments are agreed upon by the law enforcement agency as evidence by the signatures below:

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President Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers

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Law Enforcement Coordinator Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers

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Sheriff Bee County

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Sheriff Goliad County

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Sheriff Live Oak County

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City of Beeville Chief of Police

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George West Chief of Police

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Three Rivers Chief of Police

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Date Approved by the Board of Directors for Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers, Inc. Sept. 3, 2015