

308.2 Crime Stoppers

I. DISCUSSION: Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay is a private non-profit organization designed to assist law enforcement. Crime Stoppers receives anonymous tips which are forwarded to law enforcement. Tipsters are rewarded for an arrest as a result of their tip. The ultimate goal of the organization is to empower the community to have safer neighborhoods, schools and work environments by providing a voice that citizens can use to stand against criminals without fear of retaliation. The program provides the community a means via a toll-free tip line, a Crime Stoppers P3 mobile application and a secure encrypted website to anonymously and without fear of retaliation provide information to assist law enforcement regarding crime in the community and the whereabouts of wanted fugitives and firearms involved in violent crimes.

II. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Anonymous Tip: A tip reported to Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay via an anonymous tip line directed through a call center, the Crime Stoppers P3 Mobile application or the secure encrypted website and routed to the Crime Stoppers coordinator.
- B. Crime Stoppers Coordinator: A citizen, employed by Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay is assigned specifically to act as the organization's law enforcement liaison. This person is responsible for all aspects of tip management.
- C. Campus Crime Stoppers: Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay operates and funds an anonymous tip program at each public middle and senior high school within the Hillsborough and Pasco County School Districts. Student tipsters may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$500.
- D. Gun Bounty Program: A program which encourages tipsters to anonymously report illegal firearms to law enforcement and for their efforts, any tip leading to an arrest, the confiscation of an illegal firearm and a firearm charge, the tipster would be eligible for a reward.

III. GENERAL:

A. Method of Contacting/Reporting:

1. Telephone: Crime Stoppers 24-hour hotline is 1-800-873-TIPS (8477). The phone is a stand-alone instrument which does not provide a caller ID, and the conversations are not recorded.
2. Web Tips: tips may be submitted through the Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay website at www.crimestopperstb.com. The unique integrated two-way dialogue capabilities allow the tipster to come back and provide additional information to their tip at any time. It also provides a secure means for the coordinator to ask questions or provide reward information back to the tipster through the same secure and encrypted interface.

3. Crime Stoppers P3 mobile application tips are also completely secure and anonymous. Once the tip is sent via the app, the tipster will automatically receive a confidential code number so they can add additional information to the original tip if necessary. Using the same two-way dialogue capabilities of online tip reporting, Crime Stoppers will be able to re-contact tipsters regarding their tips. This application also allows for tipsters to anonymously upload photos, videos and audio files with their tips.
- B. Personnel and Staffing: Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay, Inc. is a private non-profit organization whose Board of Directors is comprised of citizen volunteers, who help run the program, raise funds for the program, educate the public and approve reward amounts. Local media publicize activities and individual cases. Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay serves every law enforcement agency within Hillsborough and Pasco Counties.

IV. PROCEDURE:

- A. Reception of Crime Stoppers Tips: Crime Stoppers phone calls are received 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through its specialized call center. Web tips are handled via the Crime Stoppers website and software 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as are mobile tips. All tips originating from the Crime Stoppers program are the sole property of Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay, Inc. Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay is the sole lessee of the proprietary hotline and tip handling software used and is responsible for the costs associated with its maintenance.
- B. Handling Cases: The Crime Stoppers Coordinator will handle all tips in accordance with the bylaws of Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay, Inc., and the Crime Stoppers Trust Fund grant requirements.
1. After a tip is received, the coordinator will determine if the tip has any value and whether the tip should be forwarded to an agency for follow up investigation.
 2. When a tip is to be worked at the Tampa Police Department, it will be forwarded via email to Real Time Crime Center for entry into ACISS and subsequent dissemination to the appropriate department entity (see below). Time sensitive tips will be forwarded to Dispatch for immediate assignment.
 - a. District tips are directed to district captains, with the exception of DLIS. Under those circumstances, tips are directed to the DLIS Sergeant.
 - b. CID tips are directed to the Sergeant of the affected unit (Homicide, Special Victims Unit, ICAC Unit, etc.).
 - c. Moral and fraud tips are directed to the CIB Economic Crimes Unit Supervisor.

3. If any tips are received by those listed above and should be directed to another agency, the recipient will send the tip back to Crime Stoppers advising the appropriate recipient. The Crime Stoppers Coordinator will then forward it to the appropriate agency. This will be done for response tracking by the Crime Stoppers Coordinator. If a supervisor determines that an assigned tip needs to be assigned to another department entity, such can be completed in the tip's ACISS assignment section.
4. The supervisor who receives the tip is responsible for assigning it ~~to someone~~ for investigation.
5. Dispositions for cases shall be reported to the Crime Stoppers Coordinator within 30 days from assignment, or unless otherwise noted in the tip itself. The response can be completed by updating the related ACISS entry and Crime Stopper disposition form. The investigator must notate whichever disposition is most appropriate.
6. **At no time shall a Crime Stoppers tip or any of its contents be included in any law enforcement record, subjecting it to public records laws.**

V. **REWARDS:**

Crime Stoppers will not pay rewards for information provided through any source other than tips submitted directly to its program through the anonymous tip line, website or P3 application.

Tips received after an arrest has already been made by law enforcement are not eligible for a reward through Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay.

Once law enforcement confirms a tip led directly to an arrest in an unsolved crime, a wanted fugitive or a gun case the tipster will be eligible for a reward of up to \$5000. Gun cases will be paid out separately in the amount of \$1000. Gun bounty awards will not exceed \$1000 per tip. If the gun is related to another offense which is solved as a result of the gun tip, the tipster may be eligible additional reward money.

VI. **CASE PROFILES:**

- A. Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay will assist law enforcement by proactively posting information on unsolved crimes and wanted fugitives on its website, push alert system, strategically placed kiosks, and social media.
- B. All information released must be approved by the investigating law enforcement agency prior to release by Crime Stoppers, if the information is not already in the

public domain.

- C. In general, only felony offenses and fugitives will be actively profiled by Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay. Misdemeanor cases may be profiled on a case by case basis, depending on circumstances that may justify the case profile.
- D. Crime Stoppers of Tampa Bay will not offer rewards or profile cases for “persons of interest.” Individuals who may be considered “persons of interest” in an unsolved crime may be profiled if the person has a warrant for their arrest, but no mention will be made of any offense in which a warrant has not yet been obtained by law enforcement.

VII. CAMPUS CRIME STOPPERS:

Student Crime Stoppers is procedurally the same as the regular program. Tips are received in the same way but forwarded to the school resource officer. Each school’s resource officer shall act as the coordinator of the program on campus. The SRO will be responsible for tip management as well as recommending rewards for student tips that result in either an arrest or administrative discipline.

VIII. GUN BOUNTY PROGRAM:

Tips related to the gun bounty program must be submitted directly through an approved Crime Stoppers method of communication.

Supersedes SOP 308.2, dated 11/20.