

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
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Over the past few months, it's likely you've been reading about various happenings in the Police Log, here in *The Amesbury News*. In fact, I'm often asked about the Log if it doesn't make the paper. The Amesbury Police "Crime Lines" is an edited version of the "Crime Bulletin" I compile each week for Officers to review at the Police Station. The "Crime Bulletin" is used to provide information about crimes, traffic concerns, suspicious activity and other log entries listed each week. It's more specific than the "Crime Lines" you read each week; listing names, addresses and other pertinent information officers should be aware of. The "Crime Lines" column does give residents an idea of the types of activity going on each day. Of course to protect privacy and personal information, it's much more general but gives readers a glimpse of the activity happening in the City.

A couple weeks back, someone made a comment to me concerning the number of welfare checks listed in the log each week. I chuckled and told him I had "to-do" list of "Watchwords" topics and actually planned an explanation in an upcoming column. Although arrests, accidents and significant crimes often catch the public's attention, police officers are involved in a wide variety of activity daily. Some may be routine but many calls are certainly more complex, sensitive and time consuming. Among those type calls are "welfare checks" when officers check on the well-being of an individual. In fact, those types of calls are a growing trend and happen regularly each day.

A welfare check could be as simple as a report of someone hitchhiking on Elm Street or as complex as someone who is suicidal or even homicidal. Cutbacks in treatment, the closing of state facilities, neighborhood group homes, prescription medications, alcohol and even illegal drugs are often associated with these calls. In some cases, the person is taken by ambulance to the hospital for a mental health evaluation and it's not uncommon for officers to respond to the same address multiple times. These types of calls are actually among the most dangerous police officers respond to because of the existing conditions. Just over the past couple months, we have responded to a number of calls where weapons are present or the person did actually commit suicide.

Police calls are never routine and dealing with someone who is mentally challenged, compromised or ill is always dangerous so Officers receive regular training to recognize and deal with the signs of mental illness. A disturbing new trend of illegal drugs, called "bath salts" is also something police are monitoring. These drugs have been linked to irrational behavior in subjects in many communities, including our own. Therefore officers are always cautious when responding to someone who is "out of control" or "under the influence" as no such call is routine.

I'd like to remind readers that the Amesbury Police Department is participating in the American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Amesbury once again this year. In fact, we are one of a few teams, participating since the first community effort to fight cancer in 2003. This year's effort is being held on August 18-19 at Landry Stadium. You can also support the Amesbury PD Team by visiting the event web site at www.relayforlife.org/amesburyma and going to the

Amesbury PD team page. Donations can be made online and every dollar makes a difference so thank you for your consideration and support.