

There are many reasons why we should all report crime to police. The most obvious is that if we don't, the offender will get away with whatever they have done, and they will then be encouraged to do it again. Often I hear some people say that they did not report it because they thought that the police were too busy and that they did not think that there was much chance of the offender being caught. If crime is not reported the offender is even less likely to be caught.

It is true police are busy but never too busy to deal with crime, no matter how trivial you may think it is. Often police will find that incidences of petty crime committed in a particular area can present a pattern, and police can plan to deal with it. On many occasions, police have caught up with the offenders a few streets away for some other crime, but unless the first crime has been reported, the offender cannot be charged with that offence.

Yes, it is time consuming and sometimes a bother to make a report, especially when you are in a hurry, but by making that report you could be saving either yourself or someone else the grief of being involved in a crime later on. The non-reporting of crime can also give a false sense of security in your area as well. After you have reported the crime to police, let your neighbours know what has happened. They can then guard against the same happening to them.

How to report a crime

Unlike the UK where we effectively have only one police force, here in Spain we have three distinct divisions within the police, The Guardia Civil, The Guardia Traffico and the Policia Local. The Policia Local are employed by the local council and have very limited powers, but most importantly they **CANNOT** investigate a crime, so please do not get the impression that the Policia Local are not interested when you go to them to report a crime and they tell you to go to the nearest Guardia Offices.

The Policia Local will however attend a crime in progress and make an arrest. If you need to report any crime after the event such as a burglary, a mugging, an assault etc then you **MUST** report it to the Guardia Civil. This is done by making out a denuncia, many ex-pats are worried by the word denuncia, but it is only a police report, exactly the same process as in the UK.

If your Spanish is not very good it is advisable to take along someone who speaks reasonable Spanish to help you in reporting the incident. If no denuncia is made the crime cannot be investigated as without a denuncia there is no record of a crime being committed, therefore nothing for the Guardia to investigate. When you have completed the denuncia you will be given a unique number to be used when checking on the progress of any investigation and also for use in the event of an insurance claim. By making a denuncia the crime will also be entered into the crime figures, this is important as these figures are used to determine the numbers of police officers allocated to an area, it is therefore essential that all criminal acts are reported to the Police.