"If You See Something, Say Something®" is a familiar phrase that I believe everyone has heard at least once. This slogan is part of a campaign that was conceived and begun about 8 years ago by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The campaign was distributed nationwide by the US Department of Homeland Security. The aim of the program is to raise citizens' awareness of suspicious activity associated with terrorism and to encourage citizens to report this suspicious behavior. The campaign's simple message reminds all of us of our important duty to be vigilant for suspicious activity that could indicate a person or groups' intentions to carry out an attack against the citizens of this country. While this campaign was originally focused on detecting and reporting terrorism-related behavior, the message also applies to more everyday situations. The see something, say something message is critical in assisting local law enforcement in fighting crime in your neighborhood as well. Law enforcement works hard to find and put a stop to those who are up to no good. However, police officers, deputies, and state troopers are stretched thin and cannot be everywhere all at once. Having involved communities that recognize and report suspicious behavior is a key element in any strategy aimed to reduce and prevent crime.

So, you may be asking what exactly is "suspicious behavior?" I would define suspicious behavior as any situation a person observes that makes them wonder, "what is going there?" It might be a strange car parked at a neighbor's residence, an unfamiliar person walking through yards at night, or a stranger at your door who doesn't seem to have a good reason for being there. Basically, any situation that gives you that uneasy feeling in your gut. Many times these situations have a legitimate explanation, which may lead some people to be reluctant to call law enforcement. I feel like I say this quite often, but it bears repeating. I would rather we respond to hundreds of suspicious activity calls that, upon investigating, have a legitimate explanation than miss that one opportunity to stop a crime or catch a criminal. So, please, when you see something, call your local law enforcement agency right away and report what you are seeing. Many times each year, citizens calling about suspicious behavior result in law enforcement arresting thieves, drunk drivers, burglars, and a host of other criminals. We are asking you to be the first link in the chain working to keep Benton County safe. When you see something, say something right away.

For more crime prevention and safety information visit the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at: https://www.co.benton.mn.us/211/Crime-Prevention. You can also like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @BentonMNSheriff for regular updates and crime prevention messages.