

Exercise 1

It is a Sunday afternoon and a person has phoned in to the news tip line saying that police have cordoned off West Street. The tipster has said there are numerous police cars there and an ambulance that was called to the street had left with its sirens screaming and lights flashing.

You are sent to the scene and on arrival you find a police officer guarding a cordon. The constable tells you that the officer in charge is too busy to speak right now, and to come back in 30 minutes – at 2.30pm. You ask him to tell you what he can and he responds by saying there has been an incident in the street and police are investigating. You ask if anyone has been hurt or killed and he says he doesn't know.

While you are waiting for the officer in charge you speak to a man who is standing by the cordon. He tells you that the police have been there since about midday. He explains that he lives in the street and that he has not been allowed to go home. His house is next to the house where all the police activity seems to be. After further questioning, he explains that the people who live at the house are a young couple with two children. The couple are named Jack and Olivia but he doesn't know their last name or their children's names. He says there is always a lot of yelling and banging coming from the house. Police have been called there many times, he says. During your interview with him he reveals that his name is John James, and that he lives at number 14 West Street. Jack and Olivia live at number 12. He also reveals that Jack is unemployed and Olivia is a teacher at the nearby primary school. He says he thinks the children are about two and three years old. He says the family have only lived at the house for about six months.

Another neighbour, Bob Pearson, approaches you and tells you that he saw Olivia being carried into an ambulance on a stretcher. He says, "She didn't look too good". Bob says he didn't hear anything going on at the house as he lives across the road at number 9 and the house is too far away. But, last week there had been a big argument between Jack and Olivia, which ended up with Jack pushing Olivia out of the front door of the house and throwing her onto the footpath. Lots of the neighbours saw what happened and police were called, he says. Bob knows that the couple's surname is Walker, and that the two children are named Jasmine and Tommy.

You call back to the office and get someone to get started on some background research on Jack and Olivia and also get them to call the hospital to try to find out what Olivia's condition is.

While you are on the phone, you see a man in handcuffs being escorted from number 12 by two police officers. He is helped into the back of a police car. The officer at the cordon sees the police car approaching and lifts the tape to allow the car through. As it slows you have enough time to snap a picture of the man in the back of the car with the camera on your phone.

Soon after the officer in charge, Detective Sergeant Pete Smith, approaches the cordon and you and the other media are given a brief statement.

The statement is:

“Earlier today police were called to a West Street address. It was ascertained that a serious assault had occurred. One person, a 28-year-old woman, was taken to hospital by ambulance, and we have since been informed that that person has since died. A 30-year-old man has been arrested and charged with assault. He will appear in Wellington District Court tomorrow where further charges are likely to be laid. The name of the deceased will not be released at this time as family have yet to be advised.”

Mr Smith refuses to answer any questions.

With the information you have gathered write a brief story for your online news site, keeping in mind any legal issues that may arise.

Exercise 2

You have been contacted by a member of the public who claims that a local antique shop is selling stolen jewellery. After interviewing the tipster, Alan Woods, you determine that he was recently burgled and after conducting his own investigation, he discovered his own watch at the antique store. He knows it is his watch as it is engraved “To Alan on your 40th Love always, Lisa.”

Alan has a picture of himself wearing the watch, but he doesn’t have a photograph of the inscription. The watch was a present from his wife Lisa on his 40th birthday. Alan and Lisa have since divorced. When he found the watch at the antique store, Alan paid \$100 to get it back, but now that he has his watch back he wants his money returned. Alan has not contacted the police as he believes they should have done the investigation that he did.

- A. Explain how you would confirm Alan’s claim and explain any other steps you would take before confronting the antique dealer.

- B. Armed with Alan’s original receipt, the watch and the receipt for \$100 from the antique shop, the two of you head down to the antique shop. You confront the antique dealer James Johnson, who denies any knowledge of the stolen watch, saying he bought it from a young man who said it belonged to his grandfather. He asked the young man for identification and was given a student identity card in the name of John Brown, but now he thinks it might have been false. Write a 250-word story of how events might have unfolded keeping in mind your legal responsibilities.

Exercise 3

A contact tells you that a high-profile sportsperson is to appear in court tomorrow charged with shoplifting a \$20 lipstick. You arrive at court, check court list and press sheets and discover a well-known netballer is due to appear at 10am before the judge.

You already have the details from the press sheet including the name and the particulars of the charge. It is 9am. There is an hour to go before court starts. You have more than enough time to file a story for your website before the appearance.

From the press sheet you learn that the netballer is 34-year-old Jane Smith, who has played goal attack for the Silver Ferns for the last two years. Two weeks ago she allegedly took one Erotic Red lipstick from Farmers.

Identify legal problems with the information you know then write a brief story.

Exercise 4

A man is charged with snatching a handbag from a 17-year-old woman in the main street in broad daylight. In the struggle, he knocks her to the ground and she is injured. It is the third time a handbag snatching has happened in the city in the last week.

A police press release tells you that he is appearing in court the next day. It also says police are still investigating and considering further charges.

The charge sheet reads Michael Johnson, a 20-year-old unemployed man, is charged with the theft of a handbag and its content worth \$300 and with assault on the woman Rebecca Craig.

He is remanded on bail to appear in two weeks without plea. There is no suppression on his name.

Write a brief story about the court appearance. Identify and discuss any legal issues.