



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Frequently asked Questions

Why do we need Neighborhood Watch?

Years ago, neighborhoods were not as transient as they are today; job transfers were not as frequent which allowed neighbors to develop long lasting relationships in their community. Communities often had that “small town” feeling with neighbor looking out for neighbor. Today, few people are in a position to protect their home and property 100% of the time. Employment, vacations, business trips, shopping trips, or just an evening out will leave our homes and valuables unattended, vulnerable to burglary or theft. The commitment to look out for each other is a key element to the success of a Neighborhood Watch Program. It’s an invitation to be a good neighbor.

What is Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is a program of mutual assistance between the Sheriff’s Office and neighborhoods aimed at reducing crime, and more importantly, the fear of crime in our communities. Simply stated, the Neighborhood Watch Program enables the residents of any community to become EXTRA EYES AND EARS for Law Enforcement.

How does it work?

An effective Neighborhood Watch Program consists of a Coordinator, Block Captains, and the residents. When a crime occurs, whether it be a crime in progress or one that has already occurred, residents are asked to contact the Sheriff’s Office FIRST. After contact with a deputy is made, the resident should contact their Block Captain, who in turn makes the Coordinator aware of the situation. The Coordinator then contacts the other Block Captains who in turn will contact the residents in their “block”.

How much of my time will it require?

Participation in Neighborhood Watch will not infringe upon your valuable time. We simply ask you to be observant while conducting your normal everyday activities. At the very most, 1 hour a month would be the amount of time required to fulfill the duties of Coordinator or Block Captain.

Does Neighborhood Watch really work?

Neighborhood Watch works...***BUT ONLY TO THE EXTENT YOU WANT IT TO.*** As a resident, you know what would be “out of the norm” or suspicious in your neighborhood. We’re counting on you to call us and let us know so we can send a deputy to check it out. Recently, because of an observant Neighborhood Watch participant reporting the tag number of a suspicious vehicle, a burglar was apprehended and is currently serving out his sentence.

YES, IT DOES WORK...IF YOU WANT IT TO!

Reactive vs Proactive

A patrolling Sheriff's Deputy may be in your neighborhood only a short time during his or her tour of duty. The Deputy may not know which cars and what people belong in your neighborhood. YOU DO, or should. You are in a better position to know these things. The majority of the Deputy's time may be reactive; responding to your neighborhood because of a complaint such as a burglary or some vandalism. The crime has already occurred and the perpetrator is long gone.

The Neighborhood Watch is a Pro-Active organization. Keep in mind...as a member of a Neighborhood Watch organization, you are not expected to solve a crime, place yourself in jeopardy or create a more dangerous situation by trying to apprehend the suspect.

The Deputy would rather be pro-active; being called to investigate a situation before a crime is committed. Checking out strangers in your area; a suspicious vehicle parked down the street; or being advised of potential criminal activity; this is what pro-active means.

As a Neighborhood Watch member, you are only asked to observe and report what you see during your normal everyday activity. Areas with aggressive participation in the Neighborhood Watch program have noted a decrease in crime.

Remember – report suspicious activity or a crime in progress to the Sheriff's Office. ***CALL THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE FIRST***. Do not call friends or a neighbor. Delaying your call reduces the response time of the deputy and may even enhance the suspects' chances to not only commit the crime, but escape. Call your neighbors after the Sheriff's Office is notified.

Now that we know what it is, how do we get started?

The first step towards creation of this program is to contact your neighbors and get them interested in attending a one (1) hour meeting. You can hold the meeting in someone's home, a library, clubhouse, church etc., in your area. Once you have selected the location, a time and date, contact the Sheriff's Crime Prevention Unit and ask a Crime Prevention Officer to attend and explain the program and distribute handout material pertaining to Crime Prevention.

At this meeting elect officers

Qualifications for street signs and official designations as a Neighborhood Watch Area:

- ✓ 40% household participation in the program
- ✓ Coordinator and Block Captains active in area
- ✓ At least one (1) Neighborhood Watch Meeting per year (example of possible topics)
 - Homeland Security
 - Residential Security
 - Personal Safety
 - Frauds and Scams

The First Start-Up Meeting

When you have your neighbors at your first meeting you will want to motivate them and quickly turn them into active Participants in your Neighborhood Watch program. Here are some good guidelines:

- Have refreshments, nametags and seating ready at least fifteen minutes before the meeting time.
- Give your neighbors a chance to socialize a little before the meeting begins.
- Prepare and review your agenda.
- Have everyone introduce himself or herself, telling the group, which home they live in.
- Ask the group to feel free to join in the discussion with their questions and comments.
- Make sure that everyone in attendance has signed in.
- At the first meeting, elect a Block Captain or Watch Coordinator to interface with law enforcement and a Social Director to set up a social event within the next 6 weeks for the first follow-up meeting.

Follow-up Meetings

Consider having your first follow-up meeting within six weeks, with further follow-up meetings every three months. It takes effort to keep your Neighborhood Watch group going. Having gained the initial enthusiasm, keep it going by getting together periodically. Frequent meetings allow your neighbors a chance to become more familiar with one another. This makes it harder for a stranger to go undetected.

Make a strong effort to get the families in your neighborhood who are not already participants to become involved.

This is also a good time to make sure that everyone has received the Neighborhood Watch/Property Engraved Stickers.

Make the time meaningful at the same time being considerate of your neighbor's time. Keep the meeting to 60/90 minutes in length.

A quarterly pot-luck based on the season of the year is a good excuse for the group to get together. Use your Neighborhood Watch group to organize other activities such as tool exchanges, garage sales and community gardens. Help each other trim shrubbery; install lighting or smoke detectors or hundreds of other community activities.

Keeping your Neighborhood Watch Active

Your Neighborhood Watch group will have high interest at the start-up and for a few meetings thereafter. The real trick is keeping the group actively going and involving all the neighbors. Here are a list of ideas to help you have regular activities, in which all the participants have fun, socialize and attempt to solve neighborhood problems.

Information Sharing

Write your own block newsletter. Keep people up to date on crime or other subjects of interest including the goings-on within your own group. With desk-top publishing so easy to do on a home computer, the task is made easy. Involve several neighbors in gathering information to share.

Carpooling

Share a ride to work, downtown shopping, etc., with a neighbor or two – especially the seniors on your block.

Block Garage Sale

Buy an ad in the local paper and post signs advertising your big block-wide garage sale. Conduct it on the same Saturday and get the whole block involved.

Block Clean-Up

Rent a dumpster for a weekend. Neighbors can share tools and expertise to help one another.

Walking/Exercise Groups

It's easier to exercise with a companion at a regular time. Organize a weight loss competition. Celebrate with a low-cal potluck.

Booster Meeting

Arrange for a speaker to come to your Neighborhood Meeting. You can always get a politician who is running for office or just been elected.

Child Care Co-Op

With the aid of your Neighborhood Watch Telephone Tree, organize a childcare co-op. This is like a baby-sitting bank, where no money changes hands, only time.

Telephone Reassurance

Establish a system whereby seniors or shut-ins are telephoned daily to make sure they are all right.

Goods Exchange

Collect unwanted books, toys or outgrown children's clothing. Exchange them with neighbors for new "treasures".

Use your imagination!

Duties of the Coordinator

The Coordinator(s) should be a “spark plug”; someone who can organize the community and raise everyone’s interest in making the Neighborhood Watch program work.

The Coordinator should:

- ✓ Be the link between the community and the Sheriff’s Office.
- ✓ Find volunteer Block Captains, or in the case of an apartment complex “Building Captains”.
- ✓ Acquire a map of the neighborhood to lay out areas that each Block Captain would cover.
- ✓ Relay information or neighborhood concerns to the Sheriff’s Office and should set meetings when necessary.
- ✓ Call meetings to order, introduce self, Block Captains and guest speakers and provide assistance to guest speakers in maintaining order and limiting discussions to the topic at hand.
- ✓ Keep attendance record of those present.
- ✓ Keeps a master list of all participants in the neighborhood watch program.

Duties of the Block Captain

The Block Captain is an important function of the program. Their duties will not change their lifestyles nor will it demand a lot of their valuable time. As a Block Captain, he or she will be the “contact person” for that part of the neighborhood. One Block Captain can handle 8 – 10 homes around theirs.

The Block Captain should:

- ✓ Encourage “block” members to participate in the program
- ✓ Disseminate information from the Coordinator to their “block” residents
- ✓ Assist the Coordinator with meetings or training sessions
- ✓ Inform their “block” members of Neighborhood Watch techniques, such as what is suspicious activity or how to report incidents or how to get a Home Security Survey from the Sheriff’s Office
- ✓ Relay information or concerns from their “block” to the Coordinator
- ✓ Welcome new residents to their “block”, encouraging them to participate in the program and give them an informational packet

As you see, becoming involved as a Coordinator or Block Captain does not demand a lot of your valuable time.

You are enhancing the over-all security of your neighborhood while maintaining the quality of life you deserve.

Duties of All Neighborhood Watch Participants

- ✓ BE ALERT TO AND AWARE OF:
 - Suspicious Activity And Crimes in Progress!
- ✓ REPORT TO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE:
 - Suspicious Activity And Crimes in Progress!
- ✓ Attend the Neighborhood Watch Program Meetings
- ✓ Encourage neighbors to join the Neighborhood Watch Meetings
- ✓ Assist the block captains and chairpersons

This is all the Sheriff's Office asks of you. Be our extra eyes and ears.

Any resident who reports an incident to the Sheriff's Office, should also advise their Block Captain of what they reported. The Block Captain should be aware of what is happening in his or her "block".

The Block Captain should then contact the Coordinator, who in turn contacts the other Block Captains asking them to report the incident to their "block". Now the entire neighborhood is aware and alert to the problem. Any reoccurrence of the problem is either going to be very difficult and even deterred because now everyone knows of it.

Communication is the Key!

Keep your neighborhood alert by being informed

By being informed of events happening within the neighborhood, residents will feel more involved in the program. They may become more willing participants and their interest will be sustained. They will be more willing to take a little time to make a big difference about their community.

Community pride will be enhanced because other community concerns can be addressed. Zoning, traffic, noise or even animals problems can be handled through this open line of communication you established with neighbors. This gives further credence to the phrase...
"There is strength in numbers."

Be Alert for Suspicious Activity in your Neighborhood

- Dogs Barking.
- Broken glass or sounds of breaking glass.
- Open doors or windows at a neighbor's residence while they are away.

Be Aware of Strangers in your Neighborhood

- Door to door salespeople or solicitors.
- Children or teenagers loitering during school hours.
- Strangers loading furniture, televisions, etc., into vehicles.
- People representing themselves as servicemen or government employees.
- Strangers knocking on your door asking for someone who doesn't live at your address.

Always ask for identification. All solicitors should have a permit. If they don't, call the Sheriff's Office.

Watch for Suspicious Cars on your Street

- Cars that don't belong.
- Vehicles cruising around through your neighborhood.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- Unfamiliar vehicles in a neighbor's driveway while they are away.

Don't Hesitate to Report suspicious Activity to the Sheriff's Office

- Keep pencil and paper available near the phone at all times.
- Do not attempt to take things into your own hands.
- Call the police and provide them with as much information as you can, i.e. description, direction of travel, tag number and any other details you observe.

DON'T ASSUME THAT SOMEONE ELSE HAS CALLED THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CALL THEM YOURSELF AT ONCE

Brevard County Sheriff's Office

J. R. "Jack" Parker, Sheriff

EMERGENCY – DIAL 911

Non-Emergency Numbers:

NORTH 264-5100

CENTRAL 633-7162

SOUTH 952-6371