



HOW TO START A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

The ABC's of Neighborhood Watch

- The program is free.
- All community residents are encouraged to participate – young and old, single and married, renter and home owner.
- You can form a Watch group around any geographical unit: a block, a finite number of homes, a park, business area, etc.
- Watch groups are an extra pair of eyes and ears for reporting crime and helping neighbors.
- Members learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and the neighborhood, and report activities that raise their suspicions to the police.

Getting organized: below are some important steps to get your Program started.

- Contact an OVPD Community Resource Officer and schedule a date for interested members of the community to meet with the officer(s) and discuss the Program. The officer(s) will give an overview of the Program, answer questions, and discuss the rest of the steps below during this initial meeting.
- Find a volunteer to serve as Neighborhood Watch Coordinator. This person will work with the officer(s) to get the program started.
- Talk with neighbors and check for their interest in a Neighborhood Watch Program. Inform them of the benefits and let them know it doesn't require frequent meetings or involve personal risks.
- Once you have decided to proceed with starting a Neighborhood Watch Program, plan your community informational meeting for a weeknight at someone's home or yard, a recreation center, local park, school or church. Don't plan to have other speakers or activities. Think of this as a business meeting. Meetings take approximately one hour. The meeting is usually held several times in a large area to allow different days for working people to attend. The OVPD Community Resource Officer(s) will conduct these meetings.
- Distribute an Invitation Flyer to the residents once the meetings are scheduled.
- Obtain Neighborhood Watch forms from the Community Resource Officer(s). (Neighborhood Watch Meeting Sign In Sheet, Neighborhood Watch Captain Information Sheet, Notice of Change Watch Captain Sheet, Telephone Tree)
- Points that will be covered by the officer(s) during the meetings include: information on crime patterns and statistics, how to recognize and report suspicious activity, services and programs available from the OVPD, and the importance of communities working in partnership with the police department to reduce crime in our town.
- Recruit volunteers to be Block Captains.
- Work with the Community Resource Officer(s) to get the Neighborhood Watch signs installed. 50% participation is desirable to be eligible for signs.
- Conduct a minimum of two activities per calendar year to remain active in the Program.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COORDINATOR AND BLOCK CAPTAINS

The role of the Neighborhood Watch (NW) Coordinator is to serve as the liaison to the police department and to assist the NW Block Captains. The NW Coordinator works with the Community Resource Officer(s) to put on community events. The role of the NW Block Captains is to coordinate small groups/clusters of 8 to 10 homes. The NW Coordinator can also be a Block Captain.

Duties of the NW Coordinator include the following:

- Maintain an updated list of members' names, addresses, and telephone numbers.
- Set up a communication network such as a telephone tree. The Community Resource Officer(s) can provide a form or you can make up your own.
- Distribute information sent out by the police department.
- Set up Co-Captains and committees as needed.
- Greet new neighbors that move into the neighborhood and provide a welcome packet that informs them about the Neighborhood Watch Program. Encourage them to get involved and recommend they have a Home Security Inspection.
- Notify the Community Resource Officer(s) if the NW Coordinator changes.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH MEMBERS

Everyone participating in Neighborhood Watch plays a very important part in the overall success of the program. Residents should:

- Learn neighbors' names and be able to recognize them and their vehicles without any hesitation.
- Keep a copy of the Neighborhood Watch map and telephone tree in an easily accessible place and continue to update them with any new information.
- Attend Neighborhood Watch activities as your schedule permits.
- Be alert to unusual or suspicious behavior in your neighborhood. **Call the police department (Emergency 9-1-1).** Inform your Block Captain of the incident. Do not call the Block Captain to report the incident when it is happening. **Call 9-1-1.**
- **Do not take any risks to prevent a crime or try to make an arrest.** Your responsibility is to report crime, being the best witness you can be. It is the police department's responsibility to apprehend criminals.
- Display Neighborhood Watch window signs in your home. NW signs advertise that your community is organized, will not tolerate criminal activity, and will report suspicious activity to police.
- Look after your neighbors' homes when they are away and ask them to look after yours. This includes picking up newspapers and putting back trash cans if gone for several days. Do not leave signals that say "no one is home."
- It is recommended that you schedule a Home Security Inspection for your home and implement the suggested security measures.
- Above all, become involved. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe.

FUN WAYS TO KEEP YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUP ACTIVE

The key to keeping a Neighborhood Watch Group active is maintaining interest over time. Make belonging to your Neighborhood Watch Group enjoyable. People are more likely to become involved and remain interested if the program is fun as well as meaningful. Below are some ideas you might like to promote continual communication between neighbors.”

- **Group purchasing.** Some businesses give discounts on large orders. Get together to make purchases of lighting, security screen doors, plants, gardening supplies, etc.
- **Working parties.** If residents have similar needs such as painting, gardening, etc. they are accomplished much faster and easier when a group does them together.
- **Holiday activities.** Decorating homes and having a contest can be done for Halloween or during the winter holiday season. An Easter egg hunt for the kids, a carnival, a 4th of July watermelon bust, the possibilities are endless.
- **Telephone reassurance/visits.** Schedule to check on the elderly and shut-ins. Ensure everything is alright with them.
- **Emergency planning.** Your block can get together to plan what to do in an emergency.
- **Progressive dinners.** Portions of the meal are served at each house on the block and everyone goes from house to house until the meal is finished. (Good for National Night Out)
- **Car pooling.** Ride share to shopping centers or grocery shopping.
- **Block gardens.** A space common to all of the residents or an unused piece of land at someone’s home can be used. A harvest celebration can be held at the end of the growing season.
- **Neighborhood yard sales.** A neighborhood yard sale attracts lots of customers and is a good way for everyone to clean out their homes and garages.
- **Neighborhood parents.** Develop a “neighborhood parent system.” Identify homes where children know they can go if they need assistance and their parents are not home.
- **Bicycle safety.** Hold a “bike rodeo” within your community. (Contact the OVPD Community Resource Officer(s) for more information).
- **Establish a Junior Watch.** Kids know what’s happening in the neighborhood before the adults. Encourage them to report suspicious activity to adults. Organize fun nights for the Junior Watch members, such as pizza parties, pool parties, movie night, etc. These activities can rotate from house to house.
- **Neighborhood Associations.** Neighborhood Watch groups are uniting to form associations or coalitions. By coordinating their efforts, individual groups find they can share valuable information, as well as increase the impact of their concerns with city and county decision makers.

Remember every neighborhood has its own personality that makes it unique. What works in one area may not work in another. So be creative and have fun!!!



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