

# A PLANNING GUIDE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

## What is Neighborhood Watch?

Police Departments across the country are learning that community participation in anti-crime programs is essential. One of the most effective ways to promote citizen interaction with police is the sharing of information. Citizen groups determine specific needs or problems and then share this information with local police. The police then act on this information and report back to the group on their progress. This program also works when the police go to public groups and organizations and make them aware of specific criminal activities or the needs of the police department.

The **Neighborhood Watch** concept is designed to target specific geographical areas and to assist citizens in these areas to:

- Establish an organizational structure and create an information sharing network.
- Help to introduce neighbors and create social ties that will help them work together.
- Allow police to train citizens on how to be proactive by preventing crime and how to recognize and report criminal activities.
- Access information and assistance from police and other Government agencies that can help to improve living conditions.
- Provide the community with a strong unified voice to inform community leaders on programs and actions that the "people" support.

Neighborhood watch cannot only be utilized as a strong tool to fight crime, it is also a strong social organization. It can also be utilized to enact other projects such as Community Clean Up, Bus Stop Safety Watch for children and locating and assisting citizens with special needs.

Neighborhood Watch is not a vigilante organization! It promotes awareness techniques and reporting crime not physical confrontation of criminals.

## So, how do I start?

The first step is to discuss interest in organizing with neighbors in your area. You should obtain a map and clearly define the boundaries for your watch area. (Start small, less than 50 residences, you can expand as you become more organized.) Distribute a flyer or go door to door and let the people in your area have input on this project.

Step two is to begin planning your first neighborhood meeting. Call the police department and schedule a date when a Crime Prevention Officer can come to speak to your group about the Neighborhood Watch concept (931-359-4044). After setting the date, select and secure a location, close to your area, to hold the meeting. Local churches and schools are usually very cooperative. Advertising the meeting is very important! Be creative with handouts and personal or phone contact s. Let everyone know when and where the meeting will be held.

The first meeting is basically a social event and an information sharing time. The police officer, who will be speaking to your group, will tell you about Lewisburg, your police department and how Neighborhood Watch can help your community. The primary goal of the first meeting is to gauge the expected participation in the project and to create an understanding for the need for Neighborhood Watch.

After the first meeting you will need to begin selecting the Neighborhood Watch director and the Block Captains. You will need either a single individual to fill the director's position or a team. You will then need one Block Captain for every 10 homes.

### The Neighborhood Watch Director

The Director is responsible for 3 main tasks:

1. Primary Contact with the Police Department. The Director passes non-emergency information from the Neighborhood Watch directly to the police department. The Director also receives information from the department and passes it to the Block Captains.

2. The Director organizes date, time, and location for Neighborhood Watch meetings and for information sharing meetings with the Block Captains.
3. The Director also reviews tips and information on suspected criminal activities within the Neighborhood Watch area and looks for patterns or for potential suspects. This information is received from Block Captains who create written documentation of suspicious activities.

### The Block Captain

The Block Captain is the primary link in the Neighborhood Watch chain of command. There should be no more than 10 homes per Block Captain. The duties include a wide range of simple tasks:

1. Meet each resident in your assigned area and offer to register them in the Neighborhood Watch.
2. Maintain an emergency phone list of all your assigned residents.
3. Be available to pass on information about criminal activities in your area. (Notice: You may be called late at night if one of your residents spot suspicious activities.)
4. Forward information to the Neighborhood Watch Director and activate the phone tree if you receive information on a suspect in your area. (The "phone tree" involves calling Neighborhood Watch members and informing them if there is an active incident going on in the area.)
5. The Block Captain also coordinates assistance programs if there are any special needs in their area and may set up social events for their members to become involved in.

### The Neighborhood Watch Members

The most important part of a Neighborhood Watch are the members. Being a Neighborhood Watch member is not a hard or time consuming job. It mostly involves becoming aware of activities in your area and taking time to report them.

1. Observe and report any suspicious activities. Report the non-emergency activities to your Block Captain by phone or on a 3x5 card. Emergencies or a crime in progress should be reported to the police (911) and then to the Block Captain.
2. Be willing to serve as an acting Block Captain in the absence of your area Block Captain or to assist the Block Captain with projects in your block.
3. Attend monthly or quarterly meetings of the Neighborhood Watch group.

## The best weapons in a Neighborhood Watch

### The "Kick Off Day"

After the first meeting and when your group has finished the initial organizing, you need to have a day to officially start the Neighborhood Watch. This will be the "Kick Off Day".

We recommend that you pick a weekend or evening when everyone in the Neighborhood Watch will be invited to a special event such as a block party or a community rally. It never hurts to have food and special events planned. Try to have the meeting outside in or near your Neighborhood Watch area. This will draw attention to your group and will encourage others in the area to want to become a part of your program.

You will need to invite your area Councilman and the Police Officers who patrol your area. This will give you a chance to meet them and to tell them your problems and to make special requests. You may also wish to invite the media to cover your events. This is a good way to tell the community about your program and how your neighborhood is fighting back against Crime.

At the Kick Off event you may want to unveil or plant your Neighborhood Watch street signs. These signs should be placed on private property near the beginning and end of your watch area.

## Let's Review...

Neighborhood Watch organizational schedule.

1. Discuss the need for Neighborhood Watch in your area with your neighbors.

2. Map out the area for your Neighborhood Watch.
3. Contact the Police Department to schedule a speaker.
4. Secure a place and time for the first meeting.
5. Advertise the meeting to your Neighborhood Watch area.
6. Have the first meeting.
7. After the meeting begin selecting the Director(s) and the Block Captains.
8. The Director should call a meeting with the Block Captains to plan which form you will use to register the members and to select a target date for the Kick Off.
9. Block Captains should make contact and attempt to register every home in your assigned block.
10. Compile a master list of all members.
11. Plan the Kick Off meeting and invite the members and guests.
12. Advertise the Kick Off day.
13. Have the Big Kick Off.
14. Work with the police to reduce crime!

## Phone numbers to remember

### Police

- **Emergency: 911**
- Non-emergency: (931) 359-4044