

Neighborhood Watch Program



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| History of Neighborhood Watch..... | Page 3 |
| What is Neighborhood Watch?..... | Page 3 |
| Initiating Neighborhood Watch..... | Page 4 |
| Responsibilities of Neighborhood Watch Coordinator..... | Page 5 |
| Responsibilities of Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer..... | Page 5 |
| Responsibilities of Block Captains..... | Page 6 |
| Responsibilities of Neighborhood Watch Participants..... | Page 7 |
| Operation ID..... | Page 8 |
| Reporting Suspicious Activity..... | Page 8 |
| Obvious things to watch and listen for..... | Page 9 |
| Not so obvious things to watch and listen for..... | Page 10 |

Neighborhood Watch Program

HISTORY OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS

In early 1972, Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs from around the country were requesting a program that would squelch the increasing burglary rate across the nation. Out of this request, the National Sheriff's Association developed a model program for today's Neighborhood Watch.

Neighborhood Watch was formed and implemented with astounding success. The rate of specific crimes such as burglary decreased as much as 75%. In addition to a decline in the burglary rate, implementation of the Neighborhood Watch program resulted in substantial reductions of other crimes as well.

Neighborhood Watch works because people want to assume a more active role in making their communities safe. It would be impractical to place a law enforcement officer into each neighborhood and very practical to utilize those who live there. Residents within a neighborhood know who belongs there and who doesn't, and what activity is suspicious. The most important reason Neighborhood Watch works is that citizens began working with; instead of relying on, law enforcement to combat crime in their community.

Watch programs have proven themselves to be effective not only in the fight against crime but have also been shown to improve the well being of the entire community. What direction the community decides to take with the program is its only limitation.

WHAT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IS !

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that:

1. teaches citizens techniques to reduce the risk of being victimized at home and in public;
2. trains citizens in the importance of recognizing suspicious activities and how to report them;
3. teaches participants how to make their homes more secure and properly identify their property; and,
4. allows neighbors to get to know each other and their routines so that any out of place activity can be reported and investigated.

WHAT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IS NOT !

Neighborhood Watch is not:

1. a vigilante force working outside the normal procedures of law enforcement ;
2. a program designed for participants to take personal risks to prevent crime; or
3. a 100% guarantee that crime will not occur in your neighborhood.

Some benefits of Neighborhood Watch:

1. Reducing the risk of being a victim of crime
2. Being better prepared to respond to suspicious activity
3. Being more informed of crime trends and patterns of crime
4. Receiving a Neighborhood Watch sign to post in your community
5. Knowing and interacting with your neighbors

INITIATING NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

How to start a Neighborhood Watch program in your community

1. Contact your local law enforcement representative; inform them of your desire to start a neighborhood watch program in your area. A Neighborhood Watch contact officer will then meet with you to discuss the idea with you. The officer will then give you forms such as the roster and flyer to announce the meeting.
2. Set a date, time, and place to hold your first meeting and notify your local law enforcement representative of the meeting. Try to give the officer a two-week notice of the meeting, if possible. In the weeks preceding the meeting, have potential members complete the roster information sheet.
3. Hold your first meeting. During your first meeting conduct introductions, elect Block Captains and Co-Captains, and explain the responsibilities of being a Block Captain. Once the roster information sheet is collected the Neighborhood Watch contact officer will make copies to be redistributed as the Neighborhood Watch member list.
4. Your local law enforcement representative will listen to the concerns of the neighborhood voiced by the residents. The officer will discuss what exactly Neighborhood Watch is, how it works, and the best ways to make it succeed. Topics for discussion by your local law enforcement representative will also include crime prevention, what suspicious activity is and how to report it, home security, home security surveys, and Operation Identification.
5. Fill out the application form to apply for a Neighborhood Watch sign. Your Neighborhood Watch contact officer will collect it and start the procedure for your group to obtain their sign(s). Organize a get together to post the sign and have some kind of celebration afterwards.

RESPONSIBILITIES of people involved with Neighborhood Watch:

Police Neighborhood Watch Coordinator

The Police Neighborhood Watch Coordinator is the overall director of the Neighborhood Watch Program. The following describes some of his or her responsibilities:

1. The Coordinator is responsible for outlining a plan of action for the direction of the Neighborhood Watch Program
2. The Coordinator keeps the Chief of Police updated on the progress of all Crime Prevention Programs and acts as a liaison between the Chief of Police and the Neighborhood Watch Groups
3. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to ensure the smooth operation of all crime prevention programs and to monitor their progress. The Neighborhood Coordinator is able to accomplish this because they know what is occurring throughout the city in relation to crime and crime prevention.
4. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to put together information necessary for the community to be made aware of into newsletters or handouts (if the information is of an emergency nature, such as crime hot spots in the city), and ensure their distribution through the Captains.
5. The Coordinator is responsible for implementing training programs and arranging education programs. These programs and their pertinent information will be passed onto the different Neighborhood Watch Contact Officers who will disseminate the information to the Neighborhood Block Captains.

Police Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer

The Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer will be responsible for overseeing the operation of Neighborhood Watch Programs in a specific area in the city.

The Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer initiates Neighborhood Watches, provides training for Neighborhood Block Captains and if requested, at neighborhood meetings. He oversees volunteer programs in their area, ensures that information received is distributed to the Neighborhood Block Captains, and updates the Block Captains on crime hot spots in their area. He also acts as a liaison of the department.

The Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer works very closely with the Neighborhood Block Captains in their area. They meet on a regular basis to exchange information such as area hot spots, new programs, and any special needs of the neighborhood to which they are assigned. They also discuss any special events, and brainstorm to find solutions for improving and overcoming any challenges. Responsibilities of the Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer include:

1. maintaining a comprehensive list of Neighborhood Watch Block Captains and participants;
2. starting Neighborhood Watch Programs through recruiting;
3. reviewing the progress of watches with Neighborhood Watch Block Captains;
4. passing on information received from the department and keeping his Neighborhood Watch Block Captains up to date and informed;
5. assists Block Captains with monthly meetings if requested;
6. arranging for training if a particular watch program requests it;
7. working with the general public to increase awareness of programs available;
8. arranging for Neighborhood Watch signs to be purchased, issued, and placed within the Neighborhood;
9. the Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer will work with the Neighborhood Block Captains to design specific crime prevention projects; and,
10. ensure, at a minimum, there is an annual up-to-date list of members.

Block Captains

The Block Captain's responsibility is a shared responsibility between two people. This is done so that if one individual cannot be present for training there will still be someone available for that community. The Block Captain's responsibilities include:

1. distributing information, such as a quarterly newsletter or updating material they receive from the Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer;
2. keeping the Neighborhood rosters up-to-date with current addresses, names, and phone numbers; and,

3. making special note of any residents within their area that have special medical needs or that require special assistance;
4. coordinating all activities for the neighborhood such as neighborhood meetings, neighborhood parties, etc.;
5. if an incident such as a crime has been reported to the Block Captain, they are to ensure 911 has been called and then, as time permits and if it is appropriate, notify all other members of the watch group;
6. greeting any new neighbors that move into the community, educating them about the Neighborhood Watch Program in the neighborhood, and provide them with the information necessary to join the program;
7. serving as a liaison between the Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer and the participants in the watch program; and,
8. informing the Neighborhood Watch Contact Officer if he or she cannot continue, and having the group meet to elect a replacement.

Neighborhood Watch Participants

Responsibilities of the Neighborhood Watch Participants include:

1. learning neighbor's names and being able to recognize them and their vehicles. Provide a trusted neighbor with emergency contact information;
2. keeping the roster in an easily accessible place and update any changes to your personal information as necessary;
3. attend all watch meetings;
4. properly identify all property using the guidelines suggested in Operation Identification;
5. keeping an eye on neighbor's homes and reporting any suspicious activities to local law enforcement and neighbors;
6. writing down a description of any suspicious looking persons or vehicles and report them to your local law enforcement agency;
7. when planning on leaving for any length of time, have mail and newspapers picked up or stopped; and,

8. notifying the Neighborhood Block Captain and neighbors if they are going away so their homes can be watched.

OTHER BENEFITS OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

OPERATION ID

Operation ID is a program where the Police Department works in conjunction with members of your watch by engraving items of value with a specific mark or marks that only you could identify. This is an important aspect of recovering stolen property since it allows for a tracking system for items that otherwise might not be able to be tracked.

HOME SECURITY SURVEYS

An important step in preventing home burglary and other crimes is to make sure that a residence is as secure as possible. A careful inspection by someone trained to observe security precautions can indicate features, which would make entry easy – or difficult – for a prospective burglar. We appreciate the opportunity to be of assistance to you in the community's fight against crime. We urge you not only to take steps to make your own residence safer, but also to become active in a Neighborhood Watch program for the benefit of your entire community.

CITIZENS ON PATROL

Citizens on Patrol is a group of people in a Neighborhood Watch program who choose to patrol their neighborhoods on foot to more actively deter and detect crime. In partnership and through training with the Frederick Police Department these volunteers will help discover, report, and ultimately apprehend those persons responsible for crime in the City of Frederick.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

How to report suspicious activity

When reporting suspicious activity dial your local law enforcement agency at **301-694-2100**. If the situation is an actual emergency dial **911**.

Using the 911 Emergency System

There are 3 different types of emergencies: Police, Fire, and Medical. You may be reporting any one of these as a result of your Neighborhood Watch Program.

How to properly use 911:

1. State clearly what kind of assistance you need: Police, Fire, or Medical
2. Stay on the phone and answer all questions. **DO NOT HANG UP UNTIL THE DISPATCHER TELLS YOU TO!** Follow the direction of the dispatcher; he or she is trained for emergency situations and will guide you through the entire process.
3. Give your specific location. (address number, intersecting streets, etc.)
4. Be sure to remain calm and speak clearly.

What the dispatcher may ask you:

- Your name, address and phone number
- What is happening
- If it is a crime, he or she may ask for:
 1. A description of the suspects vehicle
 2. The direction the suspect is heading
 3. The vehicles license plate number

Emergency calls are prioritized according to the degree that persons or property are being threatened. A crime in progress receives a quicker response than one that was committed in the past.

What is suspicious activity?

Anything that seems out of place or occurring at an unusual time or location should be reported. The below list are some of the situations that might be considered suspicious. While some, if not all, of these could have innocent explanations, the police would rather investigate these types of situations rather than be called when it is too late.

OBVIOUS THINGS TO WATCH AND LISTEN FOR:

- Any person entering a building in other than a normal manner (through the door)
- Someone screaming for help- could mean a robbery or assault
- Merchandise being sold at ridiculously low prices (the merchandise could be stolen property)
- Someone removing parts, accessories, license plates or gas from a car
- Persons looking into parked cars (may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables left in the vehicle)
- Someone entering or leaving a business **after** hours
- Sound of breaking glass or loud explosive noises (could be an accident, burglary or vandalism)
- Sound of gun shots or audible alarms
- Persons loitering around businesses, schools, parks, secluded areas or neighborhoods

WHAT TO REPORT

The primary responsibility of Neighborhood Watch is to observe and report situations, which may require response by trained personnel. Examples of emergency and non-emergency situations would include:

- crimes in progress
- injured persons
- chemical spills
- suspicious vehicles
- suspicious persons/conditions
- fires
- natural disasters
- accidents

NOT SO OBVIOUS THINGS TO WATCH AND LISTEN FOR

- Persons going door to door. Watch the person(s). If they try a door to see if it is locked, look into the windows, or go into the side or back yard, they could be looking for a house to burglarize. This type of activity becomes more suspicious if there is a car following a few houses away
- Juveniles walking through a neighborhood looking into vehicles, yards, etc. They may be looking for items to steal.

- Person or persons running, especially if carrying something of value or if someone is chasing them.
- Persons carrying property (TV, VCR, etc.) that is not wrapped or boxed as if it was just purchased. Pillow cases are a favorite with burglars to remove property
- Someone exhibiting unusual mental or physical symptoms (staggering, walking in the middle of the street, talking to self, sitting in the cold for a long period of time, etc.) The person may be injured, under the influence of drugs or otherwise need medical or psychiatric assistance.
- People going in and out of a certain residence on a daily or very regular basis especially during late or unusual hours. This could mean drug sales, illegal gambling or a “fence” operation (sale of stolen property). Watch for many visits of short duration
- Vehicles cruising in an area- moving slowly without lights or in a repetitive or aimless manner. This could be a burglar looking for place to break into, a car thief looking for a type of car to steal, a drug pusher, a sex offender, etc.
- Parked, occupied vehicles (one or more persons) even if the persons appear legitimate. This could indicate the same situations as a vehicle cruising the area.
- Sale from a vehicle (could be stolen property or drugs)
- Persons being forced into vehicles- especially children or females
- An abandoned vehicle- may be a stolen car
- Continuous repair operations at non-business locations (may indicate stolen vehicles being stripped, repainted, etc.)
- Open or broken doors and windows at a closed business or residence
- A beam from a flashlight in a house or business (might be a burglar at work)
- Persons wearing or carrying bloody clothing (could be a suspect or victim of a serious crime)
- Someone making a quick change of vehicles (could be attempting to elude police or abandoning a stolen car)

THE GOLDEN RULE:

**YOU ARE THE EYES AND EARS OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT.
YOUR JOB IS TO OBSERVE AND REPORT!**

DO NOT HESITATE! REPORT OBSERVATIONS IMMEDIATELY.

**YOUR CALL COULD SAVE A LIFE, PREVENT AN INJURY, OR STOP A
CRIME!**

**MAKE TWO PHONE CALLS WHEN YOU CALL TO REPORT
SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY OR A CRIME IN PROGRESS:**

- 1) TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT
- 2) TO A LAW ENFORCEMENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH TO KEEP THEM INFORMED
AND THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION OPEN.