

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

## What is it?

- Neighborhood Watch is a network of neighbors trained by crime prevention officers in home and self-protection, suspect identification and how to serve effectively as additional eyes and ears for law enforcement agencies in their communities.
- Neighborhood Watch works effectively at the block level because people can easily see, recognize, and cooperate. They can see and hear what activity is taking place across the street, next door, or at the property to the rear. They can most likely recognize persons or vehicles as belonging to or not belonging in the neighborhood.
- Neighbors can let each other know when they will be away for the day, evening, weekend, or on vacation, and thereby establish a targeted watch during absence. For extended periods of absence, neighbors can take turns making sure their absent neighbor's home does not gradually take on the signs of an unoccupied dwelling. The residents in a block know better than anyone else what is usual or unusual, normal or suspicious. Therefore, they are the most effective source to provide authorities with helpful information.

## How Can We Help?

### CONTACT YOUR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

- Explain that you would like to start a Neighborhood Watch group and ask for assistance.
- Ask about the crime situation in your neighborhood.



## TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS

- Canvass your neighborhood.
- Discuss crime problems in your area. Briefly explain the value of Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Ask about convenient times to schedule your initial Neighborhood Watch meeting.

## BE SURE TO MENTION THAT:

- Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings.
- It does not ask that anyone take any personal risks to prevent crime.
- Neighborhood Watch leaves the responsibility for apprehending criminals where it belongs - with your law enforcement agency.



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## Be Concerned!

\*No law enforcement agency can function effectively without the concerned assistance of responsible citizens. We are depending on you to call and tell us whenever you observe suspicious persons or actions.

\*Some people fail to call the police simply because they are not aware of what seemingly innocent activities might be suspicious. Others may notice suspicious activity and be hesitant to call for fear of seeming a “nosy neighbor”. Still others take it for granted that someone else has already called.

\*Call your local law enforcement agency immediately about all suspicious activity. Don't worry about “bothering” the authorities because that is what they are for. Don't worry about being embarrassed if your suspicions prove unfounded. Think instead about what could happen if you don't act.

### Information needed

- What happened?
- When?
- Where?
- Is anyone injured?
- Vehicle license number?
- Vehicle description?
- Direction of flight?
- Description of persons (including clothing)?

When describing suspects, notice age, race sex, height and weight.

Compare your weight and height with suspects.

Pick out some unique characteristics which will help you identify the suspect in the future if need be.

### What's Suspicious?

Basically, anything that seems even slightly “out of place” for your area or during the time of day in which it occurs may mean criminal activity.

Some of the most obvious things to watch for and report include:

- A stranger entering your neighbor's house when it is unoccupied - it may be a burglar!
- A scream heard anywhere may mean a robbery or rape.
- Offers of merchandise at ridiculously low prices could mean stolen property.
- Anyone removing accessories, license plates or gasoline from a car should be reported.
- Anyone peering into parked cars may be looking for a vehicle to steal or for valuables left displayed in the car.
- The sound of breaking glass or any other loud explosive noises could mean an accident, housebreaking or vandalizing.
- Persons loitering around schools, parks, secluded areas or in the neighborhood could be sex offenders. Persons around the neighborhood who do not live there could be burglars.
- Not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal by any means. There are many perfectly legitimate door-to-door sales, repairmen and servicemen moving around your neighborhood all the time. But criminals do take advantage of this by assuming the guise of the legitimate business representatives. After all, if a criminal looked like a criminal no one would have any trouble spotting him!

### Here are some situations involving people you might see and what their actions might mean:

- Someone is going door-to-door in your neighborhood. If, after a few houses are visited, the person tried a door to see if it is locked or goes into a back yard, it could be a burglar. Such action is even more suspicious if one person remains in the front when it occurs or if there is a car following a few houses away. Door to Door solicitors are required to register with the police department and display ID cards.
- Anyone forcing entrance into or tampering with a residence, a business or vehicle is suspicious anytime, anywhere.

- A person running, especially if carrying something of value, could be leaving the scene of a crime.
- Carrying property could be suspicious, too, if it's at an unusual hour or in an unusual place, and if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.
- A person exhibiting unusual mental or physical symptoms may be injured, under the influence of drugs or otherwise needing medical or psychiatric assistance.
- Much human traffic to and from a certain residence is not suspicious unless it occurs on a daily basis, especially during late or unusual hours. It could possibly be the scene of vice activities or a “fence” operation.

### Vehicles?

- Any vehicle moving slowly and without lights, or following a course that appears aimless or repetitive is suspicious in any location, but particularly so in areas of schools, parks and playgrounds. Occupants may be “casing” for places to rob or burglarize, or could possibly be a drug pusher or sex offender.
- Parked, occupied vehicles containing one or more persons are especially significant if observed at an unusual hour. They could be possible lookouts for a burglary in progress, even if the occupants appear to be lovers.
- Vehicles being loaded with valuables are suspicious if parked in front of a closed business or untended residence even if the vehicle is a legitimate looking commercial unit. More and more professional thieves are taking the time and trouble to “customize” their vehicles with special signs in order to move more freely without suspicion.
- Apparent business transactions conducted from a vehicle, especially around schools or parks and if juveniles are involved, could mean possible drug sales.
- Persons being forced into vehicles - especially if juveniles or females - may mean a possible kidnapping.