

Neighborhood Watch Part 1

National Crime Prevention Council 2006



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Objectives

- Examine the Importance of Neighborhood Watch
- Look at the History of Neighborhood Watch
- Discuss the Elements of Starting a Neighborhood Watch in Your Community



Strong and Healthy Neighborhoods

- We all value a sense of security as a vital feature of the neighborhoods where we live.
- A sizable number of us (about one in four) enjoy building the formal and informal links that strengthen safety.

Source - The Allstate Survey on Safer More Caring Communities



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Strong and Healthy Neighborhoods (cont.)

- People are willing to join together to increase neighborhood safety.
- Six out of ten belong to Neighborhood Watch where it is available.

Source – Are We Safe? 2001, an NCPC survey sponsored by ADT



Strong and Healthy Neighborhoods (cont.)

- Neighborhood cohesion – neighbors who know and look out for each other – is among the strongest features of safer neighborhoods, according to researchers at Harvard University.
- Safety and security is ranked one of the most essential human needs by psychologist Abraham Maslow.



The Benefits

Neighborhood Watch

- Unites the community and increases neighborhood cohesion
- Reduces fear of crime in the community
- Improves crime reporting by citizens
- Increases surveillance in the community
- Prevents and reduces crime
- Enhances homeland security



The Benefits (cont.)

Studies show Neighborhood Watch is effective because

- It brings neighbors together around a common cause – safety and security.
- It provides basic skills to all members on preventing crime and reporting suspicious activity or crimes.
- It builds a base for correcting neighborhood problems.
- It works well with other civic activities.



Neighborhood Watch Works...

Neighborhood Watch, Block Watch, Town Watch, Campus Watch, Crime Watch – whatever the name, it's one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime.



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Neighborhood Watch Works

- Birmingham, AL: Thirteen out of 15 neighborhoods had experienced high rates of burglary. After Neighborhood Watch started, 12 of the 15 had no burglaries.
- Lakewood, CO: Burglaries dropped 77 percent after Neighborhood Watch was implemented.
- Cypress, CA: Neighborhood Watch cut burglaries by 52 percent and thefts by 45 percent. The program saved police an estimated \$79,000.



Background

- Neighborhood Watch is a community-based program supported by the National Sheriffs' Association and offered by better than nine out of ten law enforcement agencies.
- Since its inception in 1972, thousands of communities have established Neighborhood Watches and made a **REAL** difference.



Basic Components

- Planning committee, chair/coordinator, block captain
- Communications: email, phone tree, meetings, special outreach, and partnering with other neighborhood groups
- Neighborhood Watch signs on the street and in windows
- Partnership with local law enforcement



How To Start Neighborhood Watch

- Every community resident can and should join – young or old, single or married, renter or home owner, business or household.
- Identify different tasks that different residents can take on. There should be roles for everyone who wants to help.



How To Start Neighborhood Watch (cont.)

- Involve local law enforcement
- Arrange a kickoff meeting
- Select leaders
- Train residents in Neighborhood Watch basics and in observation and reporting
- Assess neighborhood needs
- Build participation
- Maintain energy
- Celebrate with your neighbors



Tips for Keeping Your Neighborhood Safe

- 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 or sheriff's office.
- Any geographic unit can be the base – a street, a block, an apartment building or complex, a business district, an office building, a park, a marina, a school campus etc.



Tips for Keeping Your Neighborhood Safe (cont.)

- Watch groups are not vigilantes. They are extra eyes and ears for reporting crime and extra hands for helping neighbors.
- Neighborhood Watch helps build pride and can serve as a springboard for efforts to address such community concerns as recreation for youth, child care, and affordable housing.



First Meeting

- A successful first meeting...
 - Advertise the meeting in advance. Post invitations throughout the neighborhood.
 - Make it brief (less than two hours).
 - Arrange for a large enough meeting space, one that is accessible to people with disabilities.
 - Establish purposes and objective up front.
 - Select a chair/coordinator, at least a temporary one.



First Meeting (cont.)

- Make it a team effort. Share concerns.
- Decide to address one or two important issues to start.
- Ask for volunteers and assign tasks.
- Agree on a meeting schedule.



Observation



- Have a meeting to teach residents the best ways to observe and report crime.
- Have as many residents as possible take part in this meeting.
- Include youth, adults, and seniors.
- Remember that all see the neighborhood from different perspectives.



Observation (cont.)

- Neighbors should look and listen for...
 - Someone screaming or shouting for help
 - Someone looking into windows and parked cars
 - Unusual noises
 - Property being taken from houses where no one is at home or from closed businesses
 - Cars, vans, or trucks moving slowly with no apparent destination, or with no lights on



Observation (cont.)

- Neighbors should also look for...
 - Anyone being forced into a vehicle
 - A stranger sitting in a car or stopping to talk to a child
 - Abandoned cars
 - Any unusual activity in businesses, alleys, isolated areas, and notorious problem spots in your neighborhood



Reporting Crime

- Stay calm.
- It is important not to panic even though you might be scared.
- Call the police immediately!
- On the phone, give the police the most important information first – the location of the crime, the type of crime, whether there are injuries, where the criminal went, etc.



Reporting Crime (cont.)

- Write down what you saw and heard **IMMEDIATELY!**
- Tell the police what happened, when, where, and who was involved.
- Describe the suspect: sex, race, age, height, weight, hair color, distinctive characteristics (facial hair, scars, tattoos, accent, etc.).
- Describe any vehicle involved: color, make, model, year, license plate, and special features: stickers, dents, or decals, as well as direction of travel from the crime scene.



Reporting Crime (cont.)

- You may be asked to make a complaint or testify in court. Remember, if you don't help the police, the criminal might hurt someone else.
- The police may ask you to attend a lineup or look through collections of “mug shots” to try to identify the person you saw commit the crime.



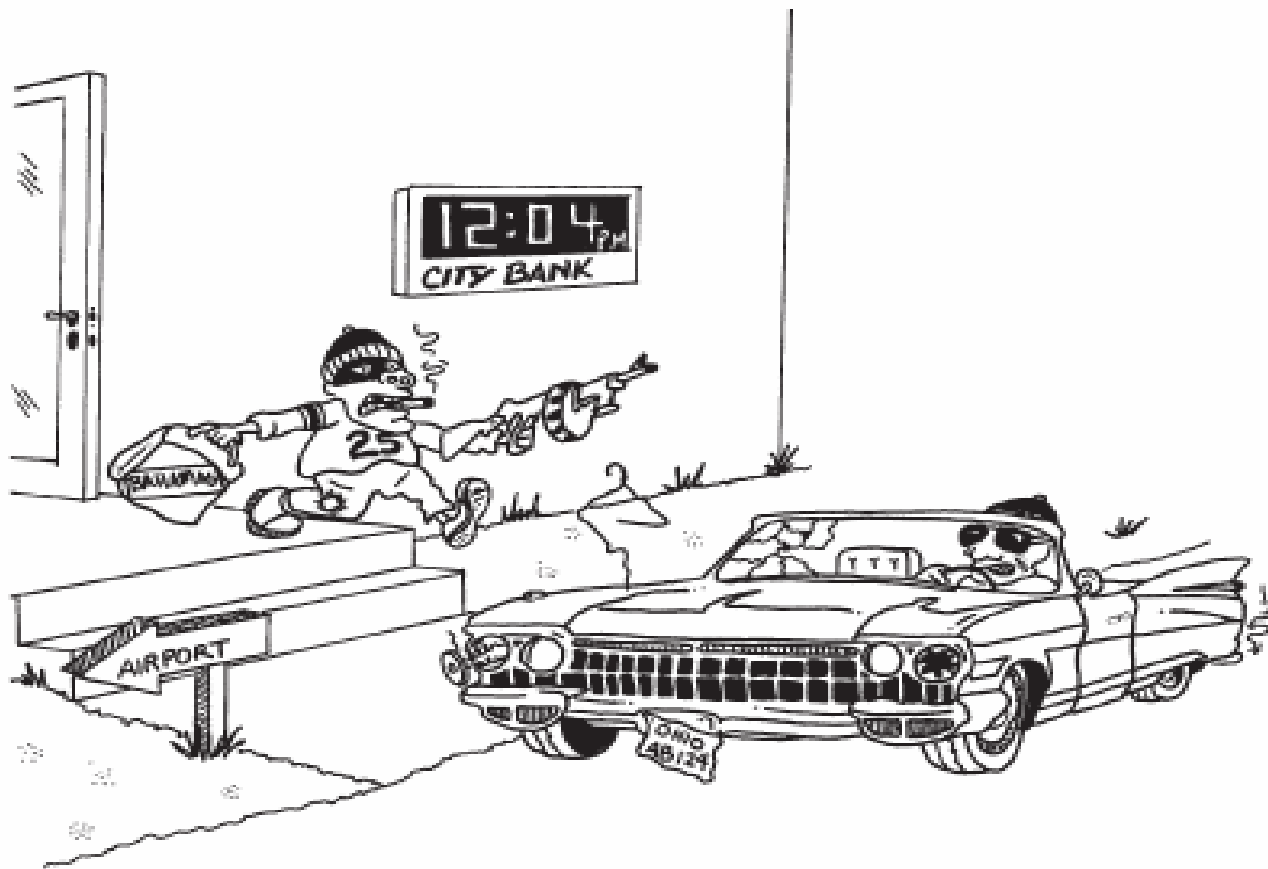
Are You A Good Witness?

- The following exercise will help you learn how to know important details that will be helpful when you report a crime.
- Divide into two groups: witnesses and officers.
- The following slide depicts a crime scene. The witnesses will view the scene and then the officers will interview the witnesses.

Source: *Community Works* curriculum, Teens, Crime and the Community



Are You a Good Witness?



Activity

- For the next five minutes, conduct your witness/police officer interviews.
- Once everyone is finished, the police officers will share their reports.
- Take a few minutes to talk about how to become a good observer.



Leadership

- Select leaders (chair/coordinator, block captains, committee chairs) with an eye toward interest, “people skills,” and commitment. Elections work well for most groups.
- Duties of chair/coordinator: Works to sustain and expand program; maintains current list of participants, arranges training, obtains crime prevention materials, coordinates with police and outside partners.



Block Captain

- Relays information to members
- Recruits seniors and youth
- Convenes and chairs block meetings
- Recruits newcomers
- Coordinates check-ins on shut-in residents
- Helps identify block problems and arranges attention to them
- Notifies chair/coordinator of changes in resident information



Leadership

Look for people who

- Will sustain the effort
- Get along well with people, listening constructively
- Use good communication, negotiating skills
- Will delegate tasks
- Conduct meetings effectively and efficiently
- Have a long-range vision of neighborhood and community improvement
- See the position as a civic duty, not a power trip or a chance for personal gain



Leadership (cont.)

Leaders should not serve forever. Rotate leadership periodically.

- Even the most energetic and dedicated leaders lose stamina
- New leadership needs to be constantly trained to move up
- Appreciate and reward leaders. Say thanks publicly.



Build Participation

- Every neighborhood resident can help.
- Young children can pick up litter and take part in specialized child safety programs.
- Youth can teach younger children how to stay safe and can organize events for other youth.
- Seniors can observe from their homes and make phone calls.
- Everybody should have a responsibility, small or large.



Resources and Partners

- Talk to other Neighborhood Watch groups working to prevent crime and drugs. Find out what has worked in their areas.
- Look to local PTAs, tenants' groups, community service clubs, social clubs, church groups, public and/or mental health associations, taxpayers' or homeowners' associations, etc., for help and ideas.



Resources and Partners (cont.)

- Partners may change depending on the issue.
- They should have the same or similar goals on the issue in common.
- Make partnership a two-way street. Share your information, resources, and expertise.
- Consider special partnerships for one-time projects.



Use Community Resources

Many people and groups are willing to help you.

Look to

- Religious institutions for meeting space, copying services and access to volunteers.
- Service clubs and businesses for partnerships in fundraising
- Government agencies for information, equipment loans, program support
- Libraries for research materials, videos, computers, and meeting space



Use Community Resources (cont.)

- Printing companies for free or discounted services
- Neighborhood restaurants for free or discounted refreshments for work crews
- Parent groups, volunteer centers, and labor unions for advice on organizing and recruiting
- Local news media for publicity



Citizen Patrols

- Citizens patrols travel the neighborhood, usually in the evening, alerting police to concerns.
- If you want to develop a citizen patrol, talk with local police about how patrols work in your area.



Citizen Patrols (cont.)

- If you do implement patrols, share patrol duties and consult regularly with law enforcement, who should help train patrols.
- Remember, citizen patrols are not met to be vigilante groups.



Operation Identification

- Operation Identification is a burglary/theft prevention program that involves indelibly marking and/or engraving property with traceable ownership identification.
- It has four purposes: to deter crime, to provide positive identification, to help with prosecution, and to aid property recovery.
- Contact your local law enforcement agency about getting involved.
- Encourage residents to participate in Operation Identification.





Questions and Answers



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Resources

National Sheriffs' Association

1450 Duke Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

703-836-7827

www.sheriffs.org

www.UAonwatch.org



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Resources (cont.)

National Association of Town Watch

PO Box 303

1 Wynnewood Road

Wynnewood, PA 19096

610-649-7055

www.nationaltownwatch.org

National Night Out - first Tuesday in August



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Resources (cont.)

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

www.ncjrs.gov



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Resources (cont.)

The National Crime Prevention Council

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Thirteenth Floor

Washington, DC 20036-5325

202-466-6272

www.ncpc.org



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Presenter Contact Information

