

Neighborhood Watch Organizer's Guide

People Working Together can Make a Difference!

Crime and fear of crime threaten a community's well-being.

Steps on How to Start a Neighborhood Watch:

Form a planning committee of neighbors to discuss needs, and the level of interest.

- Contact the local police crime prevention organization to discuss Neighborhood Watch and local crime problems.
- Publicize your meeting in advance and follow up with phone calls the day before the meeting date.
- Select a meeting place that is accessible to people as well as people with disabilities.
- Hold an initial meeting to gauge neighbor's interest; establish the purpose and the program, and begin to identify issues that need to be addressed. Stress that a Watch group is an association of neighbors who look out for each other's property and alert the police to any suspicious activities or crime in progress. And work together to make their community a safer and better place to live.

When the neighborhood decides to adopt the watch ideal it should:

- > Elect a chairperson.
- > Ask for block captain volunteers who are responsible for relaying information to members on their block. They will need to:
 - Keep up-to-date information on residents
 - Serve as liaison between the neighborhood and the police.
 - Communicate information about meetings and crime incidents to all residents.
 - Establish a regular means of communication with watch members - e.g. Newsletter, telephone tree, E-mail, Fax, etc.
 - Prepare a neighborhood list or directory showing names, addresses and phone numbers of participating households and distribute to members
- > With guidance from law enforcement agency the Watch trains its members in home security techniques, observation skills, and crime reporting. Residents also learn about the types of crime that affect the area.
- > Neighborhood Watch signs will be ordered. Two signs will be placed in neighborhood at no cost on any city street.
- > Neighbors will be asked to be alert, observant, and caring, and to report suspicious activity or crimes immediately to the police.
- > The watch concept is adaptable. A Watch can be organized around any geographic unit.

Tips for Success

- Hold regular meetings to help residents get to know each other and to collectively decide upon program strategies and activities.
- Recruit members; involve everyone, youth, seniors, renters, and homeowners.
- Gain support from the Police Department. This is critical to a Watch group's credibility. The agencies are the major sources of crime prevention education.
- Gather the facts about crime in your neighborhood.
- Address issues on physical conditions like overgrown vacant lots, sponsor cleanups, encourage residents to beautify the area, and ask them to turn on outdoor lights at night.
- > To help meet the community needs, Neighborhood Watches can sponsor meetings that address broader issues such as drugs, gangs, self-protection tactics, parking, illegal dumping, and code and compliance issues.
- > Don't forget events like National Night Out (sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch the first Tuesday in August.)



If You See Something - Please Say Something!