



INTERESTED IN NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?

Virginia Beach Police Department

A Citizen's Guide



What is a Neighborhood Watch?

Sometimes called a Citizen's Watch, or Block Watch, a Neighborhood Watch encourages residents in a particular area to prevent crime or reduce crime in that area, develop a positive rapport with law enforcement, and to be the "eyes and ears" for law enforcement.

How Do I Start a Neighborhood Watch?

You can start a Neighborhood Watch by following each of the easy steps below and checking each one as you complete it:

Step 1.

I am trying to start a Neighborhood Watch in:

- _____ a subdivision (large/small)
- _____ an apartment (duplex, family, retirement)
- _____ a mixed residential/commercial
- _____ a retirement home/nursing home
- _____ a mobile home park

Step 2.

Contact your neighbors to find out if there is interest. Talk to them by telephone, when you see them in your neighborhood, or door-to-door.

Step 3.

Plan a get-together for the neighborhood to check on interest in starting a neighborhood watch. Coffee, baked goods, and lemonade or soft drinks can be served.

How Many People Do I Need to Participate in a Neighborhood Watch program?

It is recommended that at least 80% participation is maintained for all Neighborhood Watch groups.

Neighborhood Watch is not the formation of Vigilante Groups!

How Much Time Do I Have to Spend?

As much or as little time as YOU want. Be sure to delegate responsibility to others to help.

Where Do I Have the Meeting?

Plan to have the meeting in a room at a home, your local school, a church, library, or other suitable location that is free of charge.

What Do I Do at my First Neighborhood Interest Meeting?

Explain why the get-together was called. Discuss some concerns you have about your area such as the following (check all that apply):

_____ need for neighborhood association and sense of community

_____ over-turned garbage cans

_____ broken glass

_____ child safety

_____ peeping toms / prowlers

_____ excessive noise

_____ auto / property vandalism or theft

_____ garden/garden supply theft

_____ yard/garden equipment

_____ animal / livestock problems

_____ vacant buildings

_____ accumulation of hazardous junk in yards and alleys

_____ burglaries

_____ other _____

After you discuss the concerns, determine if you and your neighbors really feel there is a need for a Neighborhood Watch.

How Can I "Sell" My Area on the Idea of a Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is a return to the "old-fashioned" days when neighbors looked out for one another and communicated with police.

Neighborhood Watch helps a community become stronger and more unified.

Neighborhood Watch generates a concern of neighbors for each other. For instance, during bad weather, whether hot or cold, neighbors can check in on other neighbors.

Neighborhood Watch lets neighbors know that someone will be there in case of a personal crisis such as a fire, flood, or crime.

Neighborhood Watch gives neighbors an opportunity to have block parties, covered dish suppers, or other events to bring the community out.

Neighborhood Watch is an opportunity to beautify your neighborhood.

Neighborhood Watch is a forum for programs and meeting officials of your community.

Neighborhood Watch is a network of different neighborhoods working together.

Now that your community has decided there is a need for Neighborhood Watch, contact the Crime Prevention Unit 385-1006 and set up a meeting.

How Does my Law Enforcement Representative Help with a Neighborhood Watch?

All crime prevention programs provided by your local law enforcement representative are FREE! They will provide FREE home security assessments, presentations on a variety of Crime Prevention topics, and keep your Neighborhood Watch group informed about the current concerns of law enforcement.

How Do I Plan the First Meeting?

(Check off as you complete the following):

- _____ 1. Contact your local law enforcement representative to determine a date that he/she could attend a meeting. A two or three week notice is requested.
- _____ 2. Publicize the meeting by posting notices or flyers, and word-of-mouth.

_____ 3. Prepare an agenda with a list of the items that need to be discussed such as the following:

- Reason for calling meeting.
- Determine date for next meeting.
- Determine if refreshments are needed. Keep these simple.
- Determine if children can attend meetings since some participants may not wish to have children in their home.
- Determine if there is enough interest in your area to start a Neighborhood Watch.
- Determine what topics the participants are interested in hearing about for future meetings.
- Introduction of law enforcement representative.

How Does my Neighborhood Watch Group Get Signs?

The City of Virginia Beach provides the signs free of charge. The number of signs will be determined by the geographical layout of the neighborhood. Many Neighborhood Watch groups become less active after signs are posted, and it may be that some groups were formed just to get the signs installed as a visible crime prevention effort. The signs remain the property of the City and may be removed if the Neighborhood Watch is not maintained.

SIGNS SHOULD NOT BE POSTED IF THERE IS NOT ASSURANCE FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUP THAT IT WILL ACTIVELY MAINTAIN THE PROGRAM

Who will be the coordinator for a Neighborhood Watch Program in my area?

The community selects the neighborhood watch coordinator. The coordinators organize "block" activity, distribute crime prevention literature to members of the group, and represent their area or section at other Neighborhood Watch activities that may be taking place in the community.

Some tips for a successful meeting

- Good lighting.
- Comfortable room temperature.
- Seating arrangement - - a semi-circle usually works best since it enhances eye contact, and encourages better interaction among members of the group.
- Inexpensive refreshments - - KEEP THESE SIMPLE!
- Be sure to have a specific purpose for each meeting and an agenda. Some flexibility is necessary but do not ramble since it is confusing and boring to those attending the meeting.
- Be sure that those who attend do not discuss their own "war stories". Your law enforcement representative's time, your time, and the time of those attending the meeting needs to be carefully monitored.

- Briefly review key points discussed at the last meeting.
- Prepare materials in advance such as displays or crime prevention devices. Be sure displays are clearly visible and labeled for those present.
- If the speaker has no timepiece in direct view, be sure to indicate by a hand signal at a certain point for a smooth ending to remarks.
- Hold the meeting to the announced time frame. No meeting should last longer than 60 minutes.
- Do not interrupt the meeting while those who are tardy make excuses for being late. Continue with your remarks.
- Do not delay your meeting for the sake of "important" persons who have not arrived. Delaying a meeting can cause serious inconveniences for those already present who may have other commitments.
- Share the bulk of the information. You do not need to lecture. Say it just as you see it or as if you were talking to your own best friend.
- Refer to prepared notes and index cards with clear, legible print. You do not need to memorize the material.
- If you plan to read directly from printed material, MARK the items with paper clips or markers so it can be found quickly. Fumbling is boring and time consuming and can lose attention.
- To keep interest, plan an activity such as filling out forms, pose a "problem" situation for discussion, or show slides.
- Arrange your agenda in units so that the meeting can end at any point. There is no way to determine how much time it will take to cover certain material.
- Even if the meeting doesn't take the full amount of time, do not introduce a new topic that must be cut off before it is discussed in full.
- Do not cram too much into one meeting. Everything will keep until next time!

Guidelines to Maintain an Active Neighborhood Watch Program

Schedule meetings as needed, or at least one per year.

Be sure to give advance notice of meetings.

Update current list of members.

If active participation is not maintained, Neighborhood Watch signs will be removed.

The Crime Prevention Office will provide you with information on how to obtain the crime statistics and current crime trends in the area, and update participants on new crime prevention techniques.