



For information on where to purchase these signs, contact the Crime Prevention Unit

PUBLISHED BY THE KERN COUNTY
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Neighborhood Watch Block Captain's Guide



Find out how you and your neighbors can help take a bite out of CRIME in your community.

Neighborhood Watch crime prevention programs are a proven and effective means to substantially reduce not only the incidence of residential burglaries in a specified geographical area, but the incidence of other crimes as well.

What is it?

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program which enlists the active participation of citizens in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime in their communities.

It involves:

****Neighbors getting to know each other and working together in a program of mutual assistance;**

****Citizens being trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhoods; and**

****Implementation of crime prevention techniques, such as home security, Operation Identification and others.**

***The key to Neighborhood Watch is
Neighbors looking out for each other!***



REMEMBER...

Call the Sheriff's Department immediately. A five-minute delay means that the chance of catching the criminal drops by two-thirds.

In many cases it is what victims and witnesses tell police about the criminal that results in an arrest. So tell the police as much as you can. No fact is too trivial.



Sometimes due to limited resources and personnel, the Sheriff's Department may not be able to respond immediately. They have to prioritize their calls based on the danger to human life involved. Don't be discouraged. They will get to you as soon as possible.

**And once you have reported the crime,
stick with it.**

It pays to prosecute.

Being a witness in court is not as difficult as you might think. Many communities have special programs to help victims and witnesses with transportation, day care services and scheduling of their cases.



How do I start a Neighborhood Watch program in my area?

First, get organized!

Contact your local law enforcement agency

Talk to your neighbors...

- Canvass your neighborhood for interest.
- Discuss crime problems in your area, using the information you received from your local law enforcement agency.
- Briefly explain the value of Neighborhood Watch programs
- Ask about convenient times to schedule your initial Neighborhood Watch meeting.



APARTMENTS OR MULT-UNIT DWELLINGS

Neighborhood Watch is easily supplemented with programs to meet the particular needs of residents within multi-unit complexes. In addition to the programs already discussed, consider the following:

If you do not feel comfortable meeting with all of your neighbors, pick just a few and agree to watch out for one another.

Discuss home and building security.

Have a law enforcement representative instruct your group and landlord on the best security devices and practices for apartments.

Work with your landlord to install necessary locks, lighting, etc. Take special precautions with patio and/or terrace areas.

PERSONAL SAFETY:

The most effective security system for apartment buildings involves a locked lobby that requires a key or cautiously operated buzzer system to admit people.

If this is not feasible, the Neighborhood Watch group can look into personal safety systems—especially with regard to the use of elevators and laundry rooms. Again, your local law enforcement agency can advise you on these matters.



And finally, if a crime does occur, report it!

Sounds easy? It is. Unfortunately, only about half of all crimes are ever reported. Too bad, because police cannot do anything if they do not know what happened. Information from people like you is the key to solving many crimes.



Even an anonymous tip is better than no report at all. So do not hesitate! Follow this rule: If you see something suspicious, call the Sheriff's Department—fast—so that they can act—fast. The longer you wait, the harder it is to catch the criminal.

Who can participate?

City or country people
Apartment dwellers
Mobile home residents
Young or older citizens
Men, women, families,
Couples, singles
In other words... **YOU!**



Why Neighborhood Watch?

There cannot be a law enforcement officer on every corner, so citizen involvement is essential to combat crime.

You and your neighbors are the only ones who really know what is going on in your community.

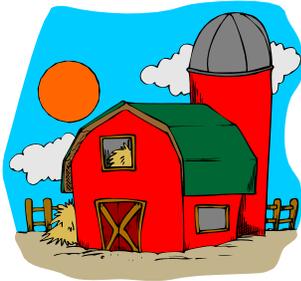
By cooperating with each other and the police, people can help fight crime in their community in the most effective way... ***before it begins.***

RURAL COMMUNITIES...

Neighborhood Watch can easily be adapted to meet the needs unique to rural communities. For example, the programs discussed earlier can be supplemented with activities, such as those below:

Work with your local law enforcement agency and county Farm Bureau to obtain security tips for heavy machinery, livestock and farm products. Consider marking your equipment with an Owner Applied Number (OAN) system.

Develop communication networks with neighbors to: relay information about equipment thefts, cattle or livestock rustling, vandalism, etc.; keep an eye on each other's property, livestock, crops, machinery, etc.; and report trespassing instances involving suspicious persons or vehicles.



Note: Citizen band radios and base stations can help you maintain important emergency communications with neighbors.



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; and

Neighborhood Watch leaves the responsibility for apprehending criminals where it belongs—with your law enforcement agency.

Arrange a date, time and place for the first meeting.

Select a time that is convenient for most neighbors and your law enforcement representative.

Plan the meeting date far enough in advance to give everyone adequate notice.

Develop and distribute a flyer announcing the meeting.

Hold the meeting in the home of a neighbor to foster an informal comfortable atmosphere. In good weather, hold the meeting outside.

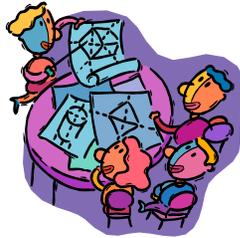
Remind people of the meeting date as it approaches (two to three days before).

Do not be disappointed if everyone cannot attend. One hundred percent neighborhood participation is desired, but is not a requirement for the program to work.



The first meeting...

- Opening remarks
- Have everyone introduce themselves
- Briefly explain the purpose of the meeting
- Comments from your law enforcement representative...



The following topics will be discussed:

- A brief introduction regarding his/her position, back ground about the law enforcement agency and his/her role in crime prevention.
- An explanation of the Neighborhood Watch program.
- The specific crime problems in your area.
- Effective crime prevention techniques for home and neighborhood safety.
- Other specialized crime prevention programs available in your community.
- How to report crime: what to look for, how to describe the person, vehicle or activity, and what other information to give, such as location, name, etc.
- A film may be shown. Please have a TV and VCR or DVD player available or notify the crime prevention specialist that they need to bring one to the meeting.

BIKE SAFETY...

Have a mini-marathon within your neighborhood for bicycle riders and conclude the event with a talk on bike security and safety.

COMPLIMENTARY PROGRAMS

Neighborhood Watch programs can be implemented wherever you live...in urban, suburban or rural areas—for apartment dwellers and homeowners alike.

Communicating and cooperating with your neighbors and your local law enforcement agency is the key.

The following activities are designed to complement the Neighborhood Watch programs of:

- Rural communities
- Apartments
- Multi-unit dwellings



Neighborhood Watch is easy!!
*It involves the three C's—Communication
Coordination and Commitment.*

BLOCK PARENTS...

Develop a “block parent” system: These are homes where children know they can go when they need assistance and their own parents are not home. Selected houses have signs in the windows so that children can find them easily.

It is also a good idea to have parents introduce their children to these “block parents” before emergencies arise.



Select a Block Captain...

Remember, just because you host the meeting does not mean that you have to be the Block Captain.

There need to be a co-block captain in addition to the Block Captain.

The Block Captain is a contact person who will interact with crime prevention staff regarding Neighborhood Watch program development.

Develop and maintain a list of all members. This should include name, address and phone number. A copy of this should be provided to crime prevention staff at the first meeting.

Assign tasks that need to be accomplished, such as:

- Collecting money for signs
- Distributing Neighborhood Watch signs
- Checking to see that the signs are posted within **two weeks**.

Sign information:

Pole signs: “pole sign” means a sign that is mounted on a free-standing pole or other support so that the bottom edge of the sign face is six (6) feet or more above the grade. (County ordinance-19.04.735)

Do not post signs on telephone or street poles.

Our department does not give you the authority to post signs on any existing poles without prior permission from agency or owner of pole.

Gather and share information...

Knowing your neighbor's basic habits and belongings will help you to recognize unusual or suspicious activities.

Basic information you might exchange includes:

- Home and work phone numbers
- Number, ages and identity of family members
- Work hours
- School hours of children
- Number and types of automobiles
- Who has dogs
- Planned vacations or visitors
- Scheduled deliveries or repairs
- Any other helpful information

Distribute Neighborhood Watch stickers for participants to put in their windows and post Neighborhood Watch signs on streets, warning burglars that this is an active Neighborhood Watch community, and

"If I don't call the police, my neighbor will."

EMERGENCY NUMBER:

9-1-1

NON EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Bakersfield area: 861-3110

All other Kern County areas: 1-800-861-3110

SILENT OBSERVERS...

In many communities, senior citizens, shut-ins, housewives and other neighborhood people watch for and report suspicious events in their neighborhoods.

Citizens can anonymously report crimes and can receive cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction through the Kern County Secret Witness program. Call your local law enforcement agency for the Secret Witness number in your area.

CRIME AWARENESS...

Law enforcement experts and community leaders can be called upon to participate in neighborhood meetings or workshops on a variety of topics. Suggested topics might include:

- Personal Safety (prevention of sexual assault, mugging, robbery, etc.)
- Vehicle protection (bike, auto, boat theft prevention)
- Drug Recognition Awareness
- School Safety
- Child safety
- Senior Safety (frauds and scams, personal safety)
- Internet Safety (for kids, teens, adults, and seniors)
- Identity Theft
- Other topics of interest

Program activities...

The key to keeping a Neighborhood Watch group active is maintaining people's interest over time. The goal is to create "small town" environments, even in the city, where people care about their neighbors and their neighborhoods.

You have access to government agencies and have a voice in affecting changes in improving the quality of life in your neighborhood. You can explore the possibilities necessary for this in a variety of ways, and at the same time, neighbors can hold block parties, potluck dinners and neighborhood cleanup campaigns.



Neighborhood Watch programs can be FUN. Remember people will most likely become involved and remain interested if the programs are fun as well as meaningful. Use your imagination.

There are a variety of programs available through your Sheriff's Department crime prevention unit that you may incorporate into your Neighborhood Watch meetings, such as the ones mentioned on the following pages:

HOME SECURITY...

Residents can learn how to secure their homes with:

- Effective door and window locks
- Adequate exterior lighting
- Landscaping
- Security "habits" (such as always using the locks you have installed)

See if your law enforcement agency provides "home security surveys" for individual residences; or

Invite a Crime Prevention Specialist to speak to your Neighborhood Watch group about home security. (Consider combining his/her talk with a potluck dinner to generate interest).

Obtain home security information from your local law enforcement agency or write to the:

Crime Prevention Center
Office of the Attorney General
P.O. Box 13197
Sacramento, CA 95813



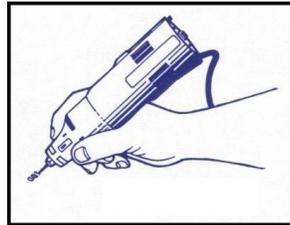
OPERATION IDENTIFICATION...

Successful Operation Identification programs help deter burglars, assist in the arrest and prosecution of criminals and facilitate the return of stolen property.



Residents should be encouraged to engrave their driver's license (preceded by the letters CA) on their personal property. This coupled with Operation Identification decals on doors and windows warn "would be" burglars that valuables are marked.

You may want to purchase an engraver for use by members of your group.



CITIZEN PATROLS...

Where street crime is a problem, residents may fear going out, especially at night. Citizen patrols help alleviate this problem in many communities.

Small groups—equipped with noise makers and sometimes two-way radios—walk the neighborhood streets in the evenings. If they see something suspicious, they blow whistles or sound alarms to scare the offender and alert neighbors or passersby. Then, they report the incident to the Sheriff's Department as soon as possible. However, **NEVER PUT YOURSELF IN A DANGEROUS SITUATION! LET LAW ENFORCEMENT DO THEIR JOB!**

(You will find that as the neighborhood becomes safer, more people will enjoy walking and riding bikes in the neighborhood which will in turn make it safer still.)

You are on your way...

Now that your Neighborhood Watch network is established, be sure that everyone understands and observes the following general guidelines:

Be suspicious. Report unusual or suspicious behavior to the Sheriff's Department. Write down descriptions of the person(s) involved and license numbers of any vehicles involved.



Keep a trusted neighbor informed if your house will be unoccupied for an extended period. It is important to leave him/her a way of reaching you if an emergency should arise.

Look after your neighbor's house when he/she is away, and ask him to look after yours. This may include collecting mail, newspapers and other deliveries which would indicate at a glance that no one is home.

Above all, be concerned. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe.

And remember—your job is to report crime. The responsibility for apprehending criminals belongs to the Sheriff's Department.

Keep the lines of communication open in your neighborhood and with Crime Prevention Unit. The office number for the **Kern County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention unit is (661) 391-7559**