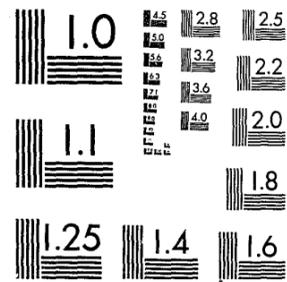


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NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
GUIDE



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PROGRAM GUIDE

Neighborhood Watch

I. Introduction

In any discussion about crime, a frequently expressed desire is to have neighborhoods return to the way they were in the good old days when one could leave the home unoccupied and not have to worry about locking doors. Neighborhoods have undergone many changes over the past couple of decades and leaving doors unlocked is not a very wise or practical habit. Times have changed but many people have not adequately rethought their ideas about safety and security. Participation in a Neighborhood Watch Program is a Crime Prevention tool people can use to make minimal changes in their lifestyles to cope with the safety and security demands placed on them by the nature of today's society.

II. Definition

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program initiated some years ago by the National Sheriff's Association to give law enforcement officials a hand in helping to control crime by getting citizens more involved in the safety and security of their own neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Watch has been necessitated by the increase in crime which has accompanied the vast changes that have taken place in our society. In past years, "neighborhood watching" happened naturally for most homes were seldom left unoccupied. Homes were often occupied by as many as three generations of one family with a grandmother, daughter and grandchildren present, who could provide casual surveillance for the neighborhood through their daily activities in and about the home. Today many homes and apartments are left vacant because of working mothers and grandparents maintaining their own homes; leaving neighborhoods practically uninhabited much of the time with no one to observe daily events taking place.

Because neighborhood watching no longer takes place naturally, a program like Neighborhood Watch is necessary to cause cohesion in the neighborhood and to encourage the neighborhood to play a greater role in maintaining its own safety and security. This safety and security comes when neighbors take an interest in the well being of each other and take the time to watch out for each other. This can be as simple as calling the police and reporting suspicious activities at a neighbor's home or as complex as organizing a neighborhood patrol which monitors activity in the neighborhood.

The best way to describe Neighborhood Watch is neighbors being "nosey" about their neighbors. The prying eyes of neighbors may at times seem a nuisance but those prying eyes are enhancing neighborhood safety and security. The Lakewood, Colorado Police interviewed a group of convicted burglars in 1978 to determine what deters a burglar from committing crime. Nearly all of those interviewed said that "the mere notice of them by a neighbor was enough to send them on their way. Interestingly however, some did not mind mere notice, citing the apathy of neighbors, and the general desire among the populace to remain uninvolved in their neighbor's affairs."

III. Operation

The police or any public official can ask that persons become more attuned to events which happen in their neighborhood by being more observant, but a more organized approach where neighbors work together is likely to produce greater results. A very informal neighborhood organization can be started by calling together neighbors to have a meeting. The meeting can be organized by a concerned citizen, an interested public official, or by a police representative who is responsible for crime prevention. It is not important how the neighborhood meeting is organized but that it takes place, for the first step in organizing a Neighborhood Watch is to get neighbors together to get acquainted and exchange information.

A. Meeting Neighbors

It is not uncommon for people to move into a neighborhood and never get more acquainted with neighbors other than waving to them when leaving for work each day. Neighborhood Watch begins by holding a neighborhood meeting where neighbors can meet and start finding out facts about each other. The meeting can provide each person with enough knowledge about his neighbors so that use of the primary tool of Neighborhood Watch can begin, being "nosey".

Information at this initial meeting will be exchanged casually but some of the exchange should be formalized. All represented families should complete a neighbor data sheet which will provide a record of neighbor's names, exact addresses, home telephone numbers and business telephone numbers. This data sheet is a simple diagram of the neighborhood depicting residencies and streets with space to record the neighbor data (see attached copy). This information can provide a quick, ready reference should an emergency or suspicious situation arise where it might be necessary to summon the police or an ambulance. The police can respond to an exact address much quicker than to directions such as two houses down from the white house on the odd numbered side of the street. A call to a neighbor at his place of employment can verify if an unfamiliar blue van parked in his home driveway is there for a legitimate purpose or that it might be prudent to call the police to check out suspicions about the van.

B. Block Captains

A Neighborhood Watch group can be given more structure by appointing block captains. The block captain should be an individual in the neighborhood who has shown a potential for leadership and a flair for organization. A block captain can be responsible for some of the following activities:

1. Maintain public awareness and group involvement.
2. Maintain communication with law enforcement personnel.
3. Organize monthly meetings to explain and discuss block problems.
4. Promote familiarity among members of the neighborhood to establish: hours of employment, hours that someone is home, number of children, number and description of family cars, etc.
5. Establish and implement a telephone notification system.
6. Solicit participation in Operation Identification and Security Surveys.
7. Identify problems other than crime in the neighborhood to motivate on-going interest.

C. Working with law enforcement

As the Neighborhood Watch group begins to grow attempts should be made to gain the involvement and assistance of law enforcement if it has not already been done. There may be an existing community-wide crime prevention program and the inclusion of new Neighborhood Watch groups will only make it stronger. Law enforcement should seek the involvement of community groups and in return can provide some of the following assistance:

1. Crime prevention resource material.
2. Assistance in implementing Operation Identification and Security Surveys.
3. Experienced crime prevention personnel who can present programs on a variety of crime prevention topics.
4. Accurate and timely information about the incidence of crime in the neighborhood.
5. Act as a referral point for problems which may not be related to crime or police service.
6. Provide instruction on how to be more observant (see attached suspicious activities list).

D. Urban, Suburban and Rural Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Watch works best in a urban or suburban area where neighborhood boundaries are easily distinguished and individuals identify themselves with a particular neighborhood but with modifications it can be adapted to all areas. The only situation where a Neighborhood Watch cannot work is where there is a highly transient population where few if any permanent residents can be identified.

In a high rise apartment building, a floor can be treated as a block and a Watch can then be developed along the same lines as a distinct neighborhood. Building clusters can be treated as block groups in garden apartment settings. Because of the proximity of neighbors there are chances for increased surveillance, although the populations will be more transient in apartment living settings.

Rural areas will pose some difficulties because of the distance between neighbors. But the remoteness of a rural area should make a strange person or vehicle more noticeable if neighbors have gotten acquainted and exchanged pertinent personal data.

IV. Program Components

A. Neighborhood Watch Sign

A warning sign can be erected at the entrance to a neighborhood to warn potential criminals that the residents are members of a Neighborhood Watch group. Quite often these signs can be obtained from the local law enforcement agency as part of its crime prevention program, may be denoted by a local business association or may be produced and purchased by the neighborhood itself (see attached Neighborhood Watch sign sample).

Sign use and placement will vary with the nature of the group. In a small town a sign can be placed at the frequent entry points into the town along its boundaries. Rural homes can have signs attached to mail boxes along the roadway and high rise apartments can have signs at lobby entrances.

B. Neighborhood Watch Decal

A supplement to the Neighborhood Watch sign is the Neighborhood Watch decal which serves the same purpose as the sign but is placed on doors or windows of individual residences. The decal can be a multi-purpose method to advertise that a particular resident participates in Neighborhood Watch, Operation Identification and Security Surveys (see attached sample Neighborhood Watch decal).

C. Neighborhood Watch Bumper Sticker

Resident vs. non-resident automobiles in the neighborhood can be identified through the use of bumper stickers which identify neighborhood residents. Individuals can then be more observant of strange vehicles and write down license numbers if circumstances appear suspicious.

D. Neighborhood Patrol

Organization of the Neighborhood Watch group and more extensive scrutinization of the neighborhood can be achieved by setting up neighborhood patrols. The intent of these patrols is not to enforce law and arrests law breakers, but to provide for a more formalized system for the surveillance of the neighborhood by the neighborhood residents.

E. Telephone Call-Up System

A telephone call up system can be established to pass on important information or to alert neighbors during an emergency or suspicious situation. Arrangements can be made by the block captains to see that designated individuals have the responsibility to contact others when necessary. If a suspicious person is spotted in the neighborhood, the telephone call up system can be used to advise all neighbors so that many pairs of eyes, instead of one pair are watching and taking note.

F. Privatizing

Sometimes Neighborhood Watch groups can work with local governments to privatize certain segments of the neighborhood. This may involve erecting barriers to limit vehicular traffic or to set aside park space for neighborhood use. This enhances the "neighborhood" qualities of an area and serves to limit or control the passage of non-residents into the neighborhood.

V. Program Success

A. Citizen's Role

Before a Neighborhood Watch can develop and become a success there must be a commitment from neighborhoods to accomplish certain things. Since Neighborhood Watch involves nothing more than neighbor involvement, without that involvement there is no program. Neighborhood watching no longer takes place naturally, neighbors must set up disciplined procedures to cause neighborhood watching to take place.



Neighborhood Watch

NEIGHBOR DATA SHEET

STREET

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

STREET

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

YOUR HOME

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus. Phone

STREET

_____ FIRE

_____ POLICE/SHERIFF

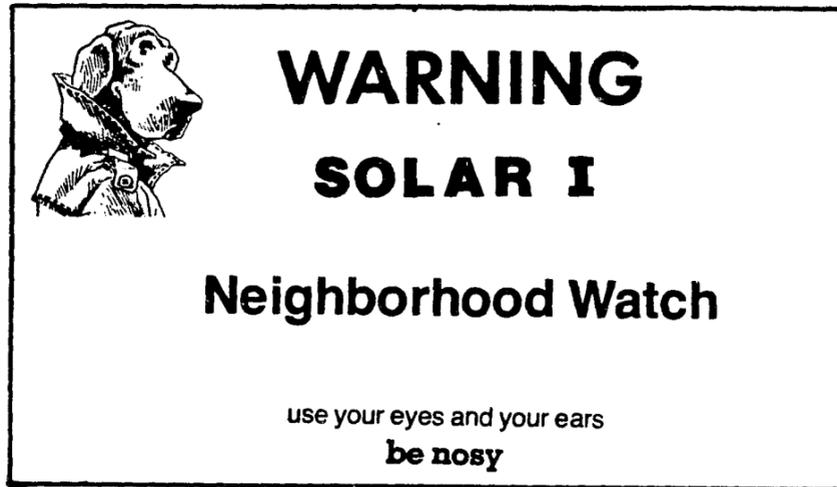
_____ RESCUE

B. Law Enforcement Role

Law enforcement cannot cause a Neighborhood Watch group to succeed without a willingness by the neighbors to become involved and commit some time. Law enforcement can serve as a catalyst to provide the initial stimulus to start a Neighborhood Watch program and then supply resource information, advice and support to cause Neighborhood Watch to grow, once the commitment is made by individuals to work together as a group to enhance neighborhood safety and security.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH SIGN

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH DECAL



SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

What To Look For . . .

Two men are selling watches and portable radios "dirt cheap" out of a station wagon parked near your place of business.

You see a stranger hanging around the playground offering candy to children.

Your neighbors are on vacation, but there's a window open on the first floor.

A stranger in the neighborhood knocks on front doors, then walks around to the back.

There's an abandoned car in an alley.

Someone is running down your street with a stuffed pillowcase, a suitcase, a TV or radio.

You are awakened late at night by a loud scream and dogs barking.

Sometimes the signs of a crime are obvious, sometimes they're not. Trust your eyes, your ears, and your common sense. Anything unusual may point to a crime.

What To Report . . .

What happened? When? Was anyone injured? What did the suspect look like? Describe suspects as carefully as you can, noting unusual features such as scars or tattoos. Was a car involved? Were there any passengers in the car? Also describe the car, noting color and make and any unusual features. If possible, get the license plate number.

Remember - no detail is too trivial!

END