Neighborhood Watch

Linking the Community together

Start Up Packet

Prince William County Police Department
Crime Prevention Unit
703-792-7270
crimeprevention@pwcgov.org
In many cases neighborhood watches are created due to problems or potential problems in the neighborhood. The interest level in neighborhood watch and crime prevention is high when residents feel their neighborhood is in jeopardy. People will do almost anything to maintain the safety and security of their neighborhood. When crime decreases or the problem is solved, people lose interest and become complacent again. This complacency can affect the safety of the neighborhood and eventually the neighborhood watch program.

The role of the neighborhood watch coordinator and block captains are important in the success of the program! Your involvement and enthusiasm of the program will encourage participation from the neighborhood.

**WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?**

A Neighborhood Watch is an organized effort by concerned citizens to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood. In cooperation with the police department, neighbors work to safeguard each other’s homes and reduce the risk of crime in their community.

**WHAT ARE THE COORDINATORS DUTIES?**

- Serve as the liaison between the watch and police department.
- Disseminate information with the watch members
- Maintain a phone list or email distribution list for the watch.
- Organize at least one meeting a year.
- Recruit new members and encourage the reporting of crime and suspicious activity.

**WHAT ARE THE WATCH MEMBER DUTIES?**

- Look out for your neighbors. Stay alert to any suspicious activity.
- Report all crime and suspicious activity to the police.
- Make your home as burglar resistant as possible. Lock your vehicles and remove any valuables.
- Recruit residents to join the watch, especially when someone new moves in the area.
- Share information with other watch members.
- Help the coordinator as needed.
IT’S EASY AS 1 - 2 - 3!

GET STARTED

1. Determine your target area. We recommend your street and other intersecting streets that are valuable to your watch. We suggest at least 12 homes, but if you have more than 35 you will need another dedicated neighbor to co-coordinate the watch with you. Traditionally smaller watches have proven to be more effective.

2. Go door to door with the survey provided in this packet. Introduce yourself, explain why you’re interested in starting a watch and have them fill out the survey for your records.

3. Select a training date (see attached training calendar) offered by the Prince William County Police Department and encourage everyone to attend.

EXPANDING YOUR WATCH

4. Return to your neighborhood and set a date for your watch meeting. Provide an invitation notice to your neighbors. The meeting can be at your home, nearby church or school, or outside if weather permitting.

5. You’re in charge and run the meeting. It’s a good idea to have everyone introduce themselves and provide information on how long they have lived on the street and why they came. Keep responses brief and tell them to only discuss recent crime. Discuss the needs of your neighborhood, what you found out from your door to door visits and tailor the meeting to your needs.

6. Present the neighborhood watch training information (received from the Police Departments Neighborhood Watch start-up training)

7. Make sure everyone signed in and you have permission to put them on an email distribution list. Provide acknowledgement of training forms to your crime prevention officer.

MAINTAINING YOUR WATCH

8. Hold watch meetings in convenient locations (ex. home, outside, park, clubhouse, school, etc.) These meetings maintain the watch and help everyone in the neighborhood become acquainted.

9. Get as many neighbors involved in the program as possible! Not everyone will want to participate, that’s ok. Make sure everyone knows about the program and that they are always welcome to attend the meetings or events.

10. Meet every 6 months or more often as needed and always report suspicious activity.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTIVITY IDEAS:
Barbeque                    Cookie exchange                    Park or street clean up
Pool party                        Pet parade                         Potluck dinner
Block party                     Ice cream social                    Bike rodeo for kids
Exercise / walking group
TIPS FOR INCREASING PARTICIPATION

- Stop thinking of neighborhood watch only in terms of a “crime program” - neighborhood watch can be a tool for improving the quality of life on your street.

- Consider the size of your watch - It is easier to organize and motivate small groups rather than large ones

- Identify a need in the neighborhood and organize a response to it - bring people together for a common good. Plant flowers in the common area or do a yard cleanup for a neighbor in need.

- Do something fun! - It doesn’t have to be expensive or elaborate but can help get the ball rolling, even if it only draws in a few neighbors.

- Do something easy - if you have a list of problems in the neighborhood start with the one you can resolve quickly.

- Plan a meeting with an interesting topic - consider what topic may be of interest and arrange for a guest speaker.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much time is this going to take?

The process is fairly simple and only requires a significant time investment during the start-up phase. After that, maintenance of the watch is really fairly minimal.

Do I have to patrol?

Formal Neighborhood Watch Patrol is not a requirement but it is encouraged. Patrolling the neighborhood ensures neighbors are being “watchful” for suspicious activity. It provides a visible deterrent to criminals, keeps people involved in the program and helps the police by using their familiarity with the area to identify suspicious activity.

Another option to formal patrolling is “passive” patrolling. This type of patrolling occurs during you and your neighbor’s daily activities. This can be done when going for a walk, jogging, driving through the community on your way home from work, etc.

What can our community do about solicitors?

There are situations in which door to door activity is not restricted. Some examples are co-op sales related to farm produce, newspapers, firewood and Christmas trees. Also political party or candidate activity and charitable, educational or religious activity are not restricted. Most private entities are required to obtain a permit. Door to door activity is not permitted one half hour after sunset to one half hour before sunrise. Signs that prohibit soliciting are not enforceable. The police can enforce signs that prohibit trespassing. Contact the non-emergency number 703-792-6500 to report a trespasser / solicitor.

Trespassing: Property owners may prohibit persons from trespassing on their property, but the person must first be put on notice. Signs are enforceable. Verbal, in-person notice will suffice. Witten notice, personally served on the party, is optimal.

People speed in our neighborhood, what can be done?

Contact the Traffic Safety HotLine at 703-792-5919. If interested in participating in the Community Speed Watch Program contact 703-792-5919. This program is a means to assist residential neighborhoods in deterring speeding in their communities. Participating volunteers operate a stationary radar unit equipped with a visual display board that reminds passing motorists of their travel speed, thus encouraging compliance with posted speed limits.
Welcome to the Neighborhood Watch Program. Neighborhood Watch is a free service sponsored by the Prince William County Police Department and operated by members of our community. We would like to invite you to become a member of our watch by completing the information sheet on the bottom of this page and returning it to the Watch Coordinator. A minimum level of interest must be established before we can proceed with the program and your support is needed.

**AS A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH MEMBER, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO:**

1. Look out for your neighbors. The Neighborhood Watch program is all about getting to know one another and watching out for each other. During the course of your daily activities remain alert of any activity occurring in your neighborhood.

2. Report any unusual or suspicious persons, vehicles or activities. You will never be asked to involve yourself by investigating suspicious activity but you will be expected to phone the police when something doesn’t look right to you.

3. Make your home as burglar resistant as possible. We do not want the homes in our neighborhood to be easy targets. Good locks, closed windows and lights on at night are your best defense. Additional home security information is available from the Police Department’s Crime Prevention Unit at 703-792-7240.

4. Explain to your children, new neighbor, friends and others the purpose of the Neighborhood Watch Program and its benefits. Solicit their support and encourage them to contribute to the program.

We hope you decide to join us. Please help in making our community safer for our property, children, and homes and safer for you. For further information contact the Prince William County Police Department’s Crime Prevention Unit at 703-792-7270.

**Your Coordinator is **

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**NAME**

**ADDRESS**

**HOME PHONE** ____________  **WORK PHONE** ________________

**E-MAIL** ___________________________________________________________________________

☐ I am interested in being a watch member

☐ I am interested in serving as a Block Captain (a point of contact for 5-10 homes)