

# Creating a Neighborhood Watch Group

## Neighborhood Watch: The Basics

Neighborhood Watch is one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime and reduce fear within a neighborhood. Neighborhood Watch creates bonds between community members and with the police department in an attempt to deter burglaries and other crimes within a specified target area. The partnership also serves to improve relations between police and the community.

## Why Should You Consider Neighborhood Watch?

- Neighborhood Watch really works. Throughout the country, dramatic decreases in burglary and related offenses are reported by law enforcement agencies in communities with active Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Today's transient society produces communities that are less personal. Many families have two working parents and children involved in many activities that keep them away from home. An empty house in a neighborhood where none of the neighbors know the owner is a prime target for burglary.

## How Does a Neighborhood Watch Group Begin?

An individual, community group, or a law enforcement agency can spearhead the efforts to establish a Neighborhood Watch Group. Together they:

- Organize a small planning committee of neighbors to discuss needs, the level of interest, and possible community problems.
- Contact the local police department for help in training members in home security, crime reporting skills, and for information on local crime patterns.
- Hold an initial meeting to gauge neighbors' interest; establish the purpose of the program; and begin to identify issues that need to be addressed.
- Select a coordinator.
- Ask for block captain volunteers who are responsible for relaying information to members.
- Recruit members, keeping up-to-date information on new residents and making special efforts to involve the elderly, working parents, and young people.

## Who can be involved?

Any member of the community can join a Neighborhood Watch Group, and all have important skills to lend to the Group. Any resident who can keep their eyes and ears open and report suspicious activities can be valuable members. And since Neighborhood Watch Groups are formed around existing geographical units such as developments, apartment complexes, business complexes, or office buildings, any resident or business professional in town can join together to make their community a safer one.

## What do Neighborhood Watch members do?

Neighborhood Watch is based on the concept of neighbors helping neighbors. Members keep their eyes and ears open for any suspicious activity, and report anything that raises their suspicions to the police department. Members also meet their neighbors, learn how to make their homes more secure, and share important information about occurrences in their neighborhood.

## What's required of a Neighborhood Watch Group?

Meetings to organize the group, share information, and stay up to date are necessary, and should be set up on a regular basis, usually twice a year. Communication is also important, and information on the Neighborhood Watch Group, police department events, community occurrences, and member training must be shared. This can be accomplished by phone chain, e-mail chain, community newsletter, and even electronic bulletin board.

**For more information on starting a new Neighborhood Watch Group or joining an existing group, contact the South Brunswick Police Department's Community Policing Bureau at (732)329-4000 ext 7459.**