

Anyone can be a victim of burglary or other crimes. Despite our best precautions, we often feel alone and vulnerable to crime. But there is a vital protection tool available—something residents in a community can do by banding together, in connection with local law-enforcement agencies, to prevent crime before it happens.

The Neighborhood Watch program

Here's a community-based program that's been *proven* to deter crime. The National Neighborhood Watch program, sponsored by the National Sheriffs' Association since 1972, unites law enforcement agencies, local organizations and individual citizens in a community-wide effort to reduce residential crime. Thousands of these programs have been developed around the country, breaking down the isolation of neighbors as they work together and with law enforcement officers. It is a remarkably successful anti-crime effort, as participants work together as a true community—neighbor looking out for neighbor.

- Any community resident can take part—young and old, single and married, renter and home owner.
- A few concerned residents, a community organization, or a law enforcement agency can spearhead the effort to organize a Neighborhood Watch.
- Members learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and the neighborhood, and report activities that raise their suspicions to the police or sheriff's office.
- You can form a Neighborhood Watch group around any geographical unit: a block, apartment building, park, business area, housing complex, office or marina.

Watch groups are *not* vigilantes. They are extra eyes and ears for reporting crimes and helping neighbors.

How to get started

Neighborhood Watch helps build pride and serves as a springboard for efforts that address other community concerns, such as recreation for youth, child care, and affordable housing.

Many of your neighbors may wish that a program like Neighborhood Watch already existed in their area, but don't know how to start one. They may not realize just how simple it is.

If you don't start a Neighborhood Watch program in your area, perhaps no one will. But once you take these first simple steps, you may be amazed at how easy it is to organize the program and what a difference it will make.

- Form a small planning committee. Decide on a date and place for an initial neighborhood meeting.
- Contact your local law enforcement agency. Request that a crime prevention officer come to your meeting to discuss your community's problems and needs. Ask the officer to bring a list of local and national contacts that will assist you in organizing and maintaining your program.

Getting organized

Contact as many of your neighbors as possible and ask them if they would be willing to meet to organize a Neighborhood Watch group in your area.

Once your program is beginning to get under way, there are several concrete steps you should take to make the organization solid and successful:

- Contact your local law enforcement agency for help in training members in home security and reporting skills, and for information on local crime patterns.
- Select a Neighborhood Watch coordinator and block captains who are responsible for organizing meetings and relaying information to members.
- Recruit new members, keep up-to-date on new residents, and make special efforts to involve the elderly, working parents, and young people.
- Work with local government or law enforcement to put up highly visible Neighborhood Watch signs and decals. These alert criminals that community members will watch and report their activities—often, this is enough to discourage them!
- Work with police to organize citizen patrols, on foot or in vehicles, to monitor certain areas at assigned times and shifts. Lost children, stranded motorists, stray dogs, damaged street signs or traffic signals, wandering cattle and auto accidents are often discovered by citizen patrols.

Neighbors look for...

- Screaming or shouting for help.
- Someone looking into windows of houses or parked cars.
- Unusual noises.
- Property being taken out of houses or buildings where no one is at home, or the business is closed.
- Cars, vans, or trucks moving slowly with no lights or apparent destination.
- Anyone being forced into a vehicle.
- A stranger running through private yards or alleyways.

- A stranger sitting in a car or stopping to talk to a child.
 - Abandoned cars.
- Don't investigate these problems on your own! Report these incidents to the police or the sheriff's department. Alert neighbors of such situations.

Developing citizen awareness

Periodic meetings of your Neighborhood Watch group should be used to develop programs to heighten citizen awareness of and proper response to suspected or actual criminal activity. Speakers from law enforcement, as well as from a wide range of community organizations can address such topics as:

- Recognizing suspicious activity and learning how to report it.
- Organizing victim assistance programs.
- Establishing "safe houses" for children in trouble.
- Developing neighborhood "youth escort services" that can accompany older people and children on errands.
- Organizing a "Crime Stoppers" program that allows individuals to offer information on crimes, anonymously.
- Setting up daily Crime Watch broadcasts, mobilizing scanner owners, and publishing neighborhood newspapers with security tips and updates.

Once you get started in organizing a Neighborhood Watch, there is virtually no limit to the innovative ways to combat crime and increase involvement of members of your community. Your neighborhood will not only become safer and more secure, but will have the added benefit of neighbors brought closer together, with opportunities to rekindle the sense of community that many areas of the country

have lost over the years.

A strong, healthy, united community is one of the strongest deterrents to crime! But it all has to start somewhere. It can start with you—beginning today!

For more information

National Neighborhood Watch Program
National Sheriffs' Association
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Alexandria, VA 22314-3490

United Against Crime

This crime prevention brochure is brought to you by RadioShack, working together with the National Crime Prevention Council (which manages the National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign) and the National Sheriffs' Association.

RadioShack has formed a special partnership with these leading organizations to provide you with answers for security that can help make your life safer.

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“How can I help get a Neighborhood Watch started?”



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If security is the question, we've got the answer.



National Crime Prevention Council



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