



Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

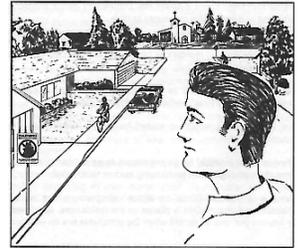


INCREASING YOUR POWER OF OBSERVATION

Learning to become an effective Neighbor "Watcher" starts with knowing *how to observe* your neighborhood for suspicious persons or situations. The observation of suspicious situations is a learned skill, effectively developed by these guidelines.

VALUE OF OBSERVATION

In police work it is often said that a police officer's greatest asset is his/her eyes. In short, it is the law enforcement officer's ability to observe his/her surroundings for suspicious activities or potential trouble. The same holds true for citizens involved in Neighborhood Watch. What you see and observe is of great importance. For example, in the course of one week a citizen will see many different things and situations. Most of what is seen will be normal and not of a suspicious nature. Understand, however, that most of what a citizen sees will not be directly observed by local law enforcement, but only by the citizen him/herself. The Neighborhood Watcher's observations are the missing link between the suspicious activity and law enforcement. Through your observation you will obtain the facts necessary to determine whether you should or should not call law enforcement.



HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR OBSERVATION

Observation is defined simply as someone paying close attention and fixing his/her mind on anything. Proper observation is a learned skill. You can become more proficient with practice and motivation. It is important that you practice proper techniques. These procedures offer many such techniques. Practice every day and soon it will become a habit well worth the effort.

USE YOUR HEAD

Just one's ability to observe is not in and of itself sufficient to detect suspicious situations. You must *think* about what you are observing. Remember, you are a thinking creature, having the ability to evaluate, deduct, reason, analyze, *and* make judgments. You must use your head together with your observations of what is happening to determine what action, if any, should be taken under the circumstances. Observation and thinking go together and must be applied at the same time.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Your ability to detect suspicious activities first starts with your knowing your neighborhood or block. You should know such things as:

- who (what person) belongs where?
- who owns what?
- who lives where?
- who is moving in or out of your block?

- who is on vacation?
- who are the “trouble-makers” on the block?

You should take notice of family problems like family fights, marital problems, delinquent children, drug or alcohol dependency, etc. By knowing all you can about your neighborhood, you should be able to focus in on potential trouble. Knowing your neighborhood does *not* mean that you are invading the privacy or “snooping” on your neighbor. It means that you are well-informed about what is going on in your neighborhood and for that reason on guard against potential trouble. If you are well aware of what your neighborhood normally looks like, you will be more likely to notice anything that is unusual, out of the ordinary routine, and therefore perhaps suspicious. Remember, anything that could be trouble or dangerous to your neighborhood is *your business*.

OBSERVE SECRETLY

You should conduct your observations of your neighborhood as secretly as possible. For example, say you see something suspicious happening in your neighborhood. Try to observe what is going on as *secretly* as you can under the circumstances. Try not to let the suspicious person know you are watching them. Remember, you are the *eyes and ears* of your law enforcement agency, but you are *not* acting in the role of the police; you are *not* “the long arm of the law.”

KINDS OF OBSERVATION

OBSERVATION FROM YOUR HOUSE

The most frequent observation is at your own home, dwelling, or apartment. Carefully study your home to determine the best observation points that will enable you to observe your neighborhood. Ideal observation points include upstairs windows, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and living room windows. Locations that face the street or overlook the neighbor’s back yard, locations that permit you to see or observe the alley and other neighbor's back door, garages, and yards are also ideal.

AUTOMOBILE AND FOOT OBSERVATION

Your ability to observe in a mobile capacity, either by car or afoot, can have a considerable effect on your Neighborhood Watch Program. The use of this mobile method of observation allows you to cover a much larger area of your neighborhood, and a closer observation of your block and neighborhood can expose you to many more suspicious activities within your community. As you drive or walk through your community, make it a habit to observe and perceive as much as you possibly can about your neighborhood. For example, who is going where and doing what; what is new or has changed. Also, be alert for any suspicious activities that might be occurring before your very eyes. Use your cell phone to alert police if you see anything suspicious. Remember, if you are driving, you should first and foremost pay attention to the road and obey the traffic laws, and when safe you can deal with your Neighborhood Watch observations.

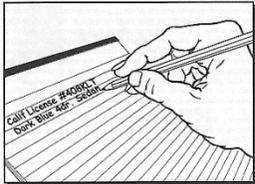
USE OF BINOCULARS

The use of binoculars to extend the length of your vision will allow you to observe things and activities that you could never do with the naked eye. For night vision, binoculars are available with special coated lenses that allow you to observe at night.



USE A NOTEBOOK

Always have a notebook ready so you can *immediately write down* any of your observations of suspicious persons, vehicles, and/or activities. You should



record in this notebook important information such as the suspect's description, method of operation, vehicle license plate number, etc. Remember to carry this notebook with you at all times, along with an adequate supply of pens or pencils. In your car, you can have the large Post-Its available for use, or you can use dry-erase markers to

make notes on your car window. You might also consider keeping a supply of Incident Report forms in your car in a storage clipboard.

NIGHT OBSERVATION

Night observation is of course more limited since the darkness obscures much of the details of your vision. Observations at night can be enhanced by using the following techniques. When observing something at night, look slightly above, below, or to the side of the object you are observing. This will make the person or thing more visually clear than if you looked directly at it, as your peripheral vision is more sensitive than direct vision at night.

RECOGNITION OF A PERSON

The ability to recognize a person from a distance is determined by several factors, including the distance between you and the person, whether you know or have seen the person before, and the time of day. For example, during the daytime you could easily recognize a person you know from a much greater distance than a person you did not know. Recognition of a person at night takes careful observation since the darkness obscures many of the finer details of the individual. Remember to be as accurate as possible in your observations of persons and to consider the limiting factors of your observations. See also the SOP "Obtain Details About the Suspect" and the Suspect Identification form.