Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE[1]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to the SOPs

What is Neighborhood Watch?

The Parkersburg and Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

Neighborhood Watch Organization

Watch Group Responsibilities

Watch Group Activities

Applying for a Watch Group Charter

Applying for a Watch Group Charter Renewal

Approving a Watch Group Charter (Including Renewal)

How to Observe and Report

Increasing Your Power of Observation

How to Detect Suspicious Activities

Obtain Details about the Suspect(s)

How to Obtain a Vehicle Description

Calling Law Enforcement

Calling 911

Everbridge Notification System

Forms

- Application for Watch Group Charter
- Individual Application
- Contact Information Update
- Incident Report Form
- Suspect Identification Form
- Sign-In Sheet

[1] All SOPs and related forms may be downloaded from www.pkb-wood-neighborhoodwatch.org/sop/

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION TO THE SOPS

As the tired old saying goes, there are tons of moving parts in any business or organization of any size. Often, the difference between a productive, successful organization and a not-so-successful one is whether these myriad "parts" are moving in concert with one another. This can be the difference between a finely-tuned machine and one that regularly breaks down—and eventually falls apart.

For our organization to run like such a finely-tuned machine (and to avoid falling apart at the seams), our team members need to be always on the same page—both literally and figuratively.

Defining our organization's practices and standards is an important step in managing the organization effectively. Standard operating procedures give everyone in our organization the information they need to support our mission, which is primarily to serve as the eyes and ears of law enforcement within our individual neighborhoods. While there's no need to micromanage every task, it can be extremely helpful to set guidelines for how our members should handle specific issues. Organizations with clearly defined guidelines can work more efficiently and effectively while minimizing indecision.

For Neighborhood Watch this becomes of critical importance, as our primary function is effective communication: communication within and among our individual Watch Groups, communication with emergency service dispatchers, communication with law enforcement and other first responders, and perhaps even communication as a key witness in a court of law.

This is where a standard operating procedure or SOP comes into play.

WHAT IS AN SOP?

A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a document that provides clear-cut directions and instructions as to how teams and members within an organization go about completing certain processes. SOPs are important because they allows our organization to systematize our processes, always keep all team on the same page, and move forward in a singular, cohesive manner to produce effective results.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the importance of SOPs is to consider the negative impact of not having them. Basically, it leaves too much up to chance: There's no guarantee that best practices will be always followed, that all team members will remain in alignment, or that the organization will continue to operate in a positive and effective manner.

Let's take a moment to dig a bit deeper into what SOPs can do for our organization.

ENSURES ADHERENCE TO BEST PRACTICES

With SOPs in place, adherence to best practices regarding all organizational processes becomes more than merely a suggestion. The point is, an SOP provides not only a "true

north" for our team to strive toward, but also a clearly-drawn map to guide us along the way. This improves the chances of experiencing a positive outcome in a given situation, while also minimizing the chances of encountering obstacles throughout the process.

It's simple: SOPs ensure our team knows the most efficient and effective way to go about a certain task or set of tasks to produce the desired result. This means we'll be expending fewer resources to experience optimal results, regardless of the task at hand.

Ensures Consistency

As previously noted, SOPs better enable our organization to run like a finely-tuned machine. A huge part of running "like a machine" is consistency. Following SOPs ensures that our team will always know the right path to take—and will always take this path when necessary. Simply put: SOPs make both decisions and processes more automatic for our team at all times.

Enables Proper Onboarding and Training

In clearly defining standard operating procedures within our organization, we inherently make new member training easier as well as improving how our existing team members are trained with regard to best practices in certain situations.

Since one of the goals of SOPs is to leave no stone unturned in terms of contingent circumstances, we'll have a better idea of what these potential circumstances are—leaving us better prepared to train our members as to how to navigate them.

In contrast, in not having clearly-defined SOPs in place, we run the risk of leaving our team uninformed and unprepared to handle certain challenges as they come about.

Maintains Organizational Knowledge

For the sake of argument, let's say our team already knows exactly how to handle any situation that comes their way—and is always able to do so effectively and efficiently. In this case, it may seem like documenting everything our team already knows would be a waste of time, money, and other resources. After all, everyone knows what to do, so why take the time to write down everything they already know?

The problem, though, is that our team isn't going to remain intact as-is forever. Members come and go, people move away, new people move into our community. In documenting SOPs, we ensure that new team members are able to pick up right where the old ones leave off.

APPLICABILITY

These SOPs define the operation of all chartered Neighborhood Watch Groups operating within the city of Parkersburg and the unincorporated areas of Wood County. At such time as the cities of Vienna and Williamstown recognize Neighborhood Watch within their city limits, these SOPs will also apply there.

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

What Is Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is a citizens' involvement program where citizens, in cooperation with their local law enforcement agency, directly participate in the detection and prevention of crime. Other names for Neighborhood Watch include: "Citizens Crime Watch," "Home Alert," or "Block Watch." Whatever the group's name is, it all flows from the same basic concept of citizens watching their community.

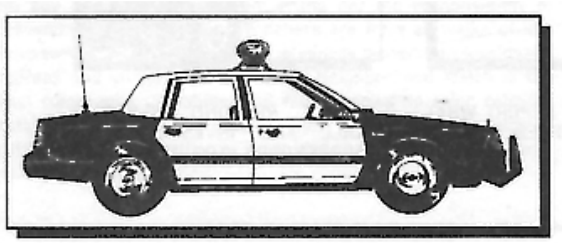
Citizens involved in Neighborhood Watch are trained in how to recognize suspicious or criminal activities and report these activities to their police department. These Neighborhood Watch Citizens keep well informed about their neighborhood and of any suspicious, criminal, or dangerous activities that may be occurring. In short, Neighborhood Watch Citizens provide valuable information to their local law enforcement agency which investigates suspicious activities, apprehends criminals, and prevents crime. Neighborhood Watch can and will make our community a better and safer place to live.

What Neighborhood Watch is *NOT*

Neighborhood Watch is *not* a group of vigilantes or lawless people taking the law into their own hands. Neighborhood Watch Citizens do not take the place of law enforcement in enforcing the law or apprehending criminals.

Why Neighborhood Watch Works

To understand the value of Neighborhood Watch in a community, you must first understand that your local law enforcement agency is limited in their available manpower. A Neighborhood Watch Program in your community will greatly help your local law enforcement overcome their manpower shortage. This is done using alert citizens within the community who are constantly observing their neighborhood for suspicious activities.



Police Officer Availability

On a national scale there is approximate *one police officer* for every *2,000 citizens*. From a practical standpoint, many police officers are not actually involved in patrolling their community. These officers are assigned to other tasks such as investigative work, administrative duties, traffic enforcement, writing reports, and court appearances. These necessary functions limit the available police manpower for neighborhood patrol.

Obviously, there are many more citizens than there are police officers. Neighborhood Watch greatly reduces this ratio of citizens to police by having Neighborhood Watch Citizens become an extension of law enforcement's *eyes and ears*.

Unlimited Citizen Availability

Neighborhood Watch provides its community with *unlimited availability* of their *citizens* to watch their neighborhoods for suspicious activities or crime. Unlike law enforcement officers who are limited in where they can be at any given time or circumstances, Neighborhood Watch Citizens are everywhere all the time. The observations of Neighborhood Watch Citizens are many times greater than any law enforcement agency could ever have the manpower to provide. This helps deter crime enormously since it puts the criminal element off balance, and the criminal, instead of limiting his concern to police patrols, must put himself on guard against an entire community watching for his criminal conduct.

How Neighborhood Watch Operates

Neighborhood watch operates in two basic ways. The Neighborhood "Watchers" (the citizens involved in Neighborhood Watch) carefully watch and observe their neighborhood, *immediately notifying law enforcement* of any suspicious or criminal activity. In addition, members utilize crime prevention measures to make it much more difficult for criminals to perpetrate crime within their community.

YOU SEE A CRIME OR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY IN YOUOR NEIGHBORHOOD

YOU IMMEDIATELY REPORT WHAT YOU HAVE OBSERVED TO THE POLICE

POLICE RESPOND TO YOUR CALL AND INVESTIGATE OR APPREHEND THE CRIMINAL

What Does Neighborhood Watch Cost?

There is no cost to join the Parkersburg/Wood County Neighborhood Watch program. The Parkersburg Police Department provides street signs for every chartered Watch Group. Other signs or decals which you may want to place on your house or street cornets may be purchased online at a nominal cost. You may wish to obtain other equipment such as spotlights, binoculars, flashlights, notebooks, crime prevention information, cell phones, CB or other walkie-talkies, all to strengthen your Neighborhood Watch Group. It is suggested that those members of the community who can afford to purchase such equipment do so and perhaps share the use of the equipment with other Group members. Those members who are not in a position to make such purchases could aid the watch program in other voluntary capacities. Neighborhood Watch is very economical and a highly efficient way to protect your neighborhood against crime.

Who May Participate in Neighborhood Watch?

Any law-abiding citizen within a community can participate in Neighborhood Watch. Citizens involved in Neighborhood Watch are adults, children, teenagers, middle-aged, and senior citizens. No age group is exempt from crime nor the responsibility of preventing it. Neighborhood Watchers are from all walks of life: housewives, blue collar workers, business owners, professionals, retirees, and students. In short, the Neighborhood Watch is the total community. Neighborhood Watch knows no color, religion, nationality, gender or gender identity, or economic dividing lines. Neighborhood Watch is citizens working together to make their community a better and safer place to live.

When Does Neighborhood Watch Occur?

Crime can occur anytime and anywhere, which means that Neighborhood Watch must be in effect 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Neighborhood Watchers are always aware of activities in their neighborhood *day* and *night*. Neighborhood Watch Programs can help during special situations or events in the community.

How Did Neighborhood Watch Start?

Early in 1970, a concerned citizen named Ellie Wegner became outraged when a close neighborhood friend of her was raped. She organized a group of neighbors to see what could be done to help this victim. At her first meeting, forty people form the neighborhood showed up. Many of these people had lived as neighbors but had never met. Though differing from each other in many ways, they each had a central concern — making their neighborhood a safe place to live. At the next Ellie Wegner meeting, this group was expanded by even more concerned citizens. What emerged from these meetings was the important concept of neighbors watching out for and caring for each other. Each member of the community could look out for suspicious activities in their assigned area of the neighborhood. If they observed any suspicious behavior, or if a fellow citizen needed help, someone was there to telephone law enforcement for immediate aid.

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

THE PARKERSBURG AND WOOD COUNTY NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH CO-OP

ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Neighborhood Watch is one of the oldest and most effective crime prevention programs in the country, bringing citizens together with law enforcement to deter crime and make communities safer.

National Neighborhood Watch began in 1972 with funding in part by the National Sheriffs' Association, through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The funding from the grant has come to an end. But NSA knows how vital a program this is.

Our nation is built on the strength of our citizens. Every day, we encounter situations calling upon us to be the eyes and ears of law enforcement. Not only does Neighborhood Watch allow citizens to help in the fight against crime, it is also an opportunity for communities to bond through service. The Neighborhood Watch Program draws upon the compassion of average citizens, asking them to lend their neighbors a hand. The National Neighborhood Watch Program (formerly USAonWatch) is the portal for training to assist law enforcement agencies and their communities, technical assistance, resource documents, watch stories, networking, and assistance to the field.

Since 1972, the National Neighborhood Watch Program (housed within the National Sheriffs' Association) has worked to unite law enforcement agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens in a nation-wide effort to reduce crime and improve local communities. The success of the program has established Neighborhood Watch as the nation's premier crime prevention and community mobilization program. Visible signs of the program are seen throughout America on street signs, window decals, community block parties and service projects.

Sponsored by the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), Neighborhood Watch can trace its roots back to the days of colonial settlements, when night watchmen patrolled the streets. The modern version of Neighborhood Watch was developed in response to requests from sheriffs and police chiefs who were looking for a crime prevention program that would involve citizens and address an increasing number of burglaries.

The National Neighborhood Watch program empowers citizens to become active in community efforts through participation in Neighborhood Watch groups. Neighborhood Watch counts on citizens to organize themselves and work with law enforcement to keep a trained eye and ear on their communities, while demonstrating their presence at all times of day and night. (The program took off quickly: in just ten years, NSA data showed that 12 percent of the population was involved in a Neighborhood Watch.) Neighborhood Watch works because it reduces opportunities for crime to occur; it doesn't rely on altering or changing the criminal's behavior or motivation.

THE COOPERATIVE

Under the direction of the Parkersburg Chief of Police and the Wood County Sheriff, the officers of the Parkersburg and Wood County Neighborhood Watch Cooperative (the Co-op) are dedicated to the control, management, maintenance, and most importantly, the implementation of and the transition to the concept of Community-Oriented policing in the city of Parkersburg, West Virginia, and the surrounding unincorporated areas of Wood County. All Neighborhood Watch Groups within Wood County that are recognized by law enforcement are charted by and come under the jurisdiction and supervision of the Co-operative.

The organization of the Co-op is based on the geographic distribution of the Neighborhood Watch Groups in the city and county. The geographic boundaries are determined by the law enforcement zones established for the cities and county.

The Co-op President is the guiding force of the Neighborhood Watch Co-op. This individual works regularly with the Parkersburg Police Department and Wood County Sheriff's Office to understand, relate, and communicate the focus, direction, needs, and desires of the entire area-wide community to the police and sheriff's departments to complement the partnership between law enforcement and the citizens. In addition, the President must direct regularly scheduled Co-op meetings, appoint committees to address specific problems and concerns, and generally exhibit administrative characteristics that command respect and direct the orderly fashion of business as it is required.

A Neighborhood Watch Group is a group of concerned citizens in a small geographic region of a community (usually not more than two or three blocks) who are organized, committed, informed, and structured in a hierarchy of Watch Captains, Co-Captains, Lieutenants, and Watchers.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

The Neighborhood Watch has seven primary objectives:

1. Maintain a cooperative system of surveillance over one another's property, children, etc.
2. Report suspicious activity, suspicious persons, or crimes in progress accurately and immediately to the police.
3. Mutually assist and encourage the attainment of home security surveys, crime target hardening procedures, property marking activities, comprehensive crime prevention awareness, and the elimination of the opportunity for crime.
4. Maintain a continuing system for the dissemination of information and educational materials relative to self-protection and criminal awareness and adjust program emphasis in accordance with the most current information.
5. Encourage neighbors to report crimes and come forward as witnesses of criminal activity.
6. Assist and support victims of crime.
7. Help elderly or debilitated citizens and children protect themselves from becoming crime victims. Advocate and push for additional projects to protect these special groups of persons whenever necessary.

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

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH ORGANIZATION

This SOP provides information about the organizational structure of the Neighborhood Watch Co-op and specific information about the individual Watch Groups in various neighborhoods throughout Parkersburg and Wood County.

Although we *are not* first responders, Neighborhood Watch follows the general recommendation for lines of responsibility defined by the National Response Framework (NRF)[1] established following the 9/11 attacks. The NRF establishes a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management and is followed by all government and private emergency and disaster response agencies. This includes all emergency responders such as law enforcement, fire departments, and emergency medical service (EMS) responders, and *includes their support organizations*. We consider ourselves as supportive of law enforcement.

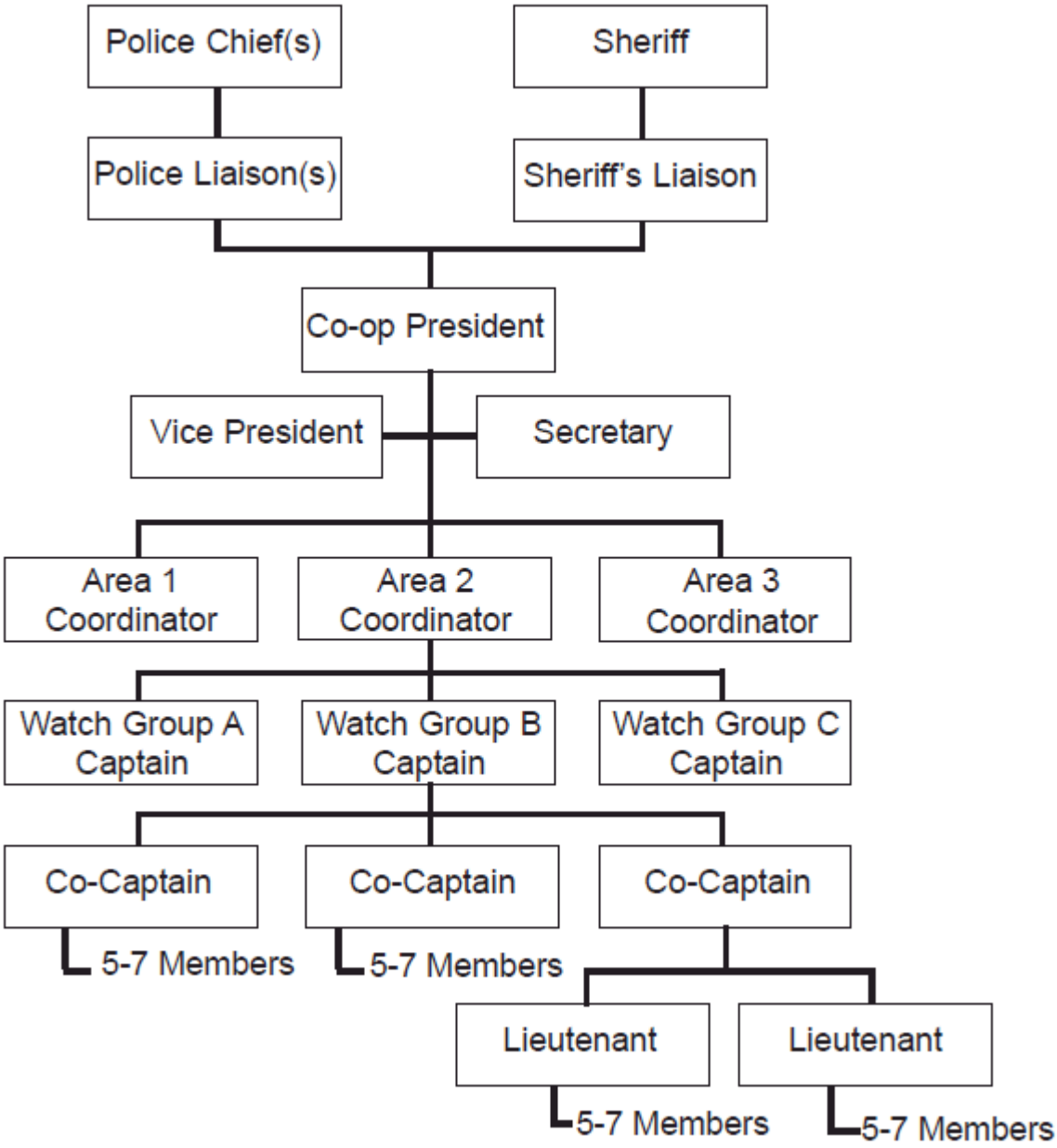
The Co-op President coordinates directly with the Parkersburg Police Chief (or his designee, generally the Uniformed Division Commander) and with the Wood County Sheriff (or his designee) and has the overall responsibility to oversee, coordinate, and support the efforts of the individual Watch Groups. As the organization continues to grow, there will *eventually* be assigned Area Coordinators for the various geographical areas of the city and county, ideally with each Coordinator responsible to oversee five to seven Watch Groups.

As of this writing, the county is divided into the following Law Enforcement Zones, though Vienna and Williamstown do not presently recognize Neighborhood Watch:

- Parkersburg Police Zones
  - 1 – South Side
  - 2 – Downtown
  - 3 - Central
  - 4 – North End
- Sheriff's Department North and South Zones
- Vienna Police North and South Zones
- Williamstown Police Department

A Watch Group is a group of concerned citizens in a small geographic region of a community (usually not more than two or three blocks) who are organized, committed, informed, and structured in a hierarchy of Watch Captains, Co-Captains, Lieutenants, and Watchers (members). Within each Watch Group, the Watch Captain is assisted by one or more Co-Captains so that each Co-Captain is responsible to oversee no more than five to seven Watchers or Watcher families. When a Watch Group becomes sufficiently large, Lieutenants need to be assigned so that no individual is responsible for more than five to seven families or residences.

[1] The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's brochure on the National Response Framework may be found at https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019-06/national_response_framework.pdf.



Typical Organization Chart

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

WATCH GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES

POLICY

To remain chartered and in good standing, Watch Groups must be actively involved in the normal functions of a Neighborhood Watch Group and of the Neighborhood Watch Co-op, and to comply with these Standard Operating Procedures.

WATCH CAPTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

COMMUNICATION

The real key to any successful Neighborhood Watch program is communication. The Watch Captain is responsible to ensure that lines of communication within his/her Watch Group and among the members are maintained. Each Watcher (Watch Group member) should have current contact information for every other Watcher in the group. It is recommended that the roster be divided into a manageable call tree so that in the event of an emergency no individual will be responsible for contacting more than three others.

MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Participation in the Neighborhood Watch Co-op is a condition of membership. At least one person from each Watch Group is expected to attend each regularly scheduled meeting of the Co-op and report back to the group at the Group's regular meeting. It is *strongly* recommended that Captains, Co-captains, and Lieutenants make a real effort to attend every Co-op meeting, and it is hoped that most Watchers would also be encouraged to attend. Watch Captains who are not able to attend Co-op meetings should ensure that at least one delegate is sent with the Captain's full authority to act on his/her behalf at the meeting. Watch Groups which are not represented at three consecutive Co-op meetings may have their charter revoked. Co-op meetings are open to the public, and your neighbors who are not members but who are interested in Neighborhood Watch should be encouraged to attend.

It is *strongly* recommended that Captains conduct monthly meetings of their Watch Groups to network and to share information about activities and safety/security risks in their neighborhood. Members of the Group need to know each other for the whole purpose of Neighborhood Watch to be successful. The meeting need not be formal but might consists of a cookout, pool party, block party or other outdoor or indoor social activity. Regular training will keep the Group interested and efficient. Refer to the SOP "Watch Group Activities" for more ideas. Above all, keep it fun and interesting.

Use the Sign-In Sheet to keep a record of attendance at all Group functions. Include non-members on your Sign-In Sheet.

DELEGATION

Watch Captains can't do it alone. Best organizational management principles teach that no individual can effectively oversee more than seven others, and five is even better. See

"Neighborhood Watch Organization." Watch group responsibilities should be delegated to Co-Captains and Lieutenants as shown on the organization chart so that the 5-7 ratio is preserved. In very active Watch Groups, Captains should consider assigning duties and responsibilities to others based on the individual skill sets. For example, one person might be assigned to line up guest speakers/teachers for monthly meetings, another with clerical skills might be assigned to take care of Group records, another might be assigned to organize Group potlucks and other social functions. Use your imagination to keep your group actively involved.

ROSTER[1]

The Watch Captain is responsible for maintaining a current roster of all members of his/her watch group and of promptly notifying the Co-op President of changes to the Group's roster. The information that is required to be submitted to the Co-op President on each Watch Group Member includes: (Use the Contact Information Update form)

- First and last name and middle name or initial
- Street address (including apartment number, if applicable
- Telephone number(s):
    - Mobile/Cell, and indicate if capable of receiving SMS text messages
    - Home (landline)
    - Business Number for *Businesses* that are registered members (Neighborhood Watch will not contact business numbers for individuals)
- Email address, if any
- Radio Call Sign(s), if any; include Ham, GMRS, and/or tactical call signs

CO-CAPTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

Co-captains report to their Captain and are responsible for assisting the Captain in the performance of all the above responsibilities and for performing other duties as assigned. Depending upon the size and complexity of the Watch Group, Captains may choose to appoint Lieutenants to assist Co-captains. Remember that the basic idea is that nobody can effectively oversee more than seven others. Refer to the SOP "Neighborhood Watch Organization."

LIEUTENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Lieutenants report to Co-captains and are responsible for overseeing not more than five to seven Watchers or Watcher households and for performing other duties as assigned.

WATCHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Individual Watchers and Watcher households are responsible to stay actively involved in the Watch Group and for participating in Group activities as much as practical. Watchers need to notify their Lieutenant (Co-captain or Captain, as appropriate for the Watch Group) of any changes in their contact information. Watchers should also notify up the chain of communication any time they call emergency services. It is strongly recommended that all Watchers use the Incident Report and Suspect Identification forms to keep a record of all calls to emergency services.

[1] Do NOT include anyone on your roster who is not an *active* member of your Watch Group.

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

WATCH GROUP ACTIVITIES

In addition to serving as eyes and ears for your local law enforcement agency, here are some other kinds of Neighborhood Watch activities that may be incorporated into the Neighborhood Watch Citizens' Involvement Program. Just think of how beneficial they would be for your community.

- Distribute anti-crime information to citizens within your neighborhood or community regarding how to prevent and deter crime.
- Hold public meetings with your local law enforcement agency about crime in the community and what can be done about it. These meetings could educate the community about suspicious activities and preventive measures to take.
- Conduct home security checks to help detect and prevent fellow citizens' homes and residences from being burglarized or broken into.
- Welcome new members to your neighborhood and encourage them to join the Neighborhood Watch Program.
- Set up a special watch or escort for senior citizens or other potential victims.
- Provide "Safe Houses" for young people to go to after school or in time of an emergency to avoid being hurt or mistreated.
- Develop a special "Vacation Watch" program where specific attention and observation is placed on the residences, apartments, or houses that will be vacant when the occupants are on vacation.
- Monitor special CB emergency frequency (Channel 9) for calls for help by citizens in need.
- Contact the local newspaper and/or media for public attention regarding the crime prevention efforts of your neighborhood or community.
- Aid victims of crime with both emotional support and other assistance that may be needed.
- Post Neighborhood Watch warning signs and decals on citizens' windows, street corners, and other conspicuous locations letting the would-be criminal know this is a Neighborhood Watch Community. [The Parkersburg Police Department provides street signs for Co-op *chartered* Watch Groups located within city limits.]
- Contact elected officials and demand that stronger laws be enacted to punish drug dealers, robbers, child molesters, domestic abusers, and other kinds of criminals.
- Conduct an "Operation Identification" program where citizens within the community mark their valuables with identifying markings so they can be recovered if stolen.

- Conduct periodic Child Identification Program sessions to fingerprint children in the neighborhood so they can be more readily identified in case of abduction. [The fingerprint cards are kept in the parents' possession, not filed with the police department.]
- Consider becoming a Licensed Amateur Radio (Ham) Operator so you will be able to provide emergency communications for your neighbors in the event of a disaster or long-term power outage. [Wood County Emergency Communications conducts periodic one-day Amateur License classes for the Technician (no Morse Code required) license class. Contact information is at www.wc8ec.org.]
- Start a School Watch Program which is just like Neighborhood Watch but designed especially for schools.
- Sponsor and conduct periodic Disaster/Emergency Preparedness seminars and workshops for your neighborhood. In the event of a disaster, it may be 72 hours or longer before police, fire, or ambulances services are able to get to you. This training will give you and your family the tools that you need to survive until help arrives. Consider using the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training program for this training, either online on in a classroom setting.[1]

[1] The FEMA Independent Study (IS) course for CERT is available online from the FEMA Emergency Management Institute website at https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-317.a.

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

APPLYING FOR A WATCH GROUP CHARTER

POLICY

A Neighborhood Watch Charter is how a local Neighborhood Watch Group becomes recognized by the law enforcement agency in whose jurisdiction the neighborhood is located, and by the Parkersburg and Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op. Each group applying to become a chartered Watch Group must complete, submit, and have approved an Application for Watch Group Charter, along with an Individual Application for each member of the new Watch Group.

Each chartered Watch Group must submit an Annual Renewal Application for Watch Group Charter each year not later than the second regular meeting of the Co-op. Watch Groups which fail to submit their Annual Renewal Application on time will be dropped from active membership in the Co-op until such time as the Renewal Application is received and approved by the Board of Directors.

FORMS YOU WILL NEED

Both forms can be downloaded from our website.

- Application for Watch Group Charter
- Individual Application (one for each member of your new Watch Group)

PROCEDURE

Talk to your neighbors and spark their interest. Try to get the majority of your neighbors to participate. Typically, your Watch Group area should not exceed two or three blocks at most. For a larger area, you should divide into multiple Watch Groups of not more area than three block each.

Contact any one of our officers or Parkersburg Police Department representatives and set up a date and place for a meeting (church, school, or residence).

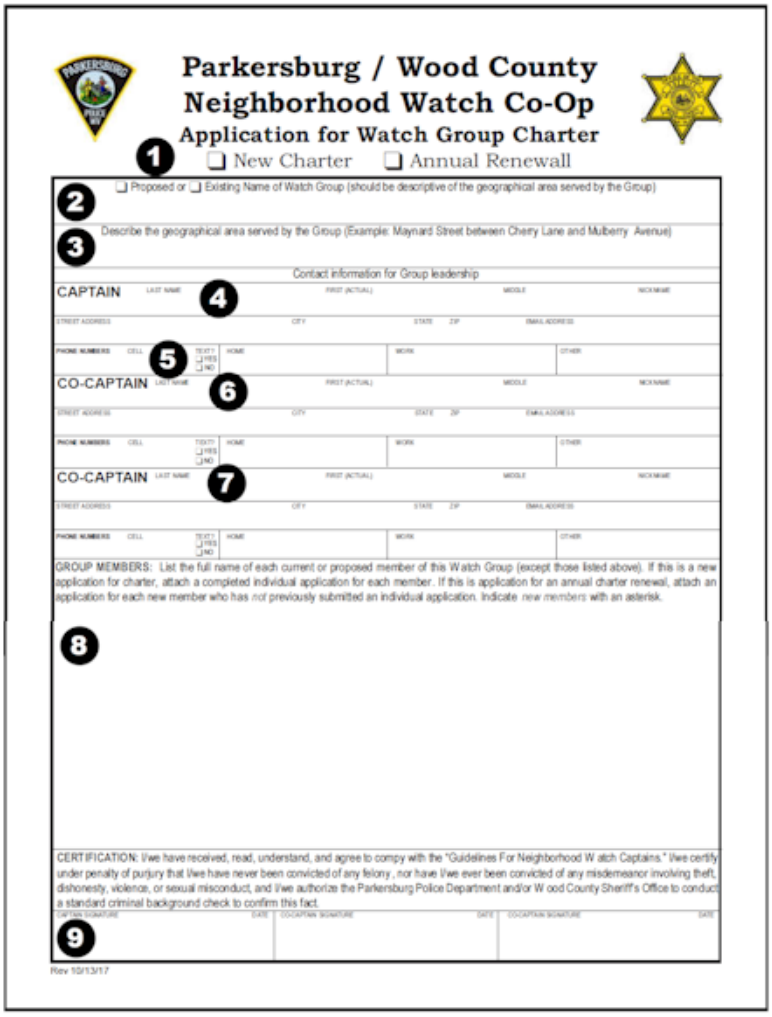
Invite all interested neighbors.

At the meeting ...

- A representative from the Neighborhood Watch Co-op and/or the Police Department will attend and bring handouts.
- Talk about crime prevention and specific neighborhood problems (usually a group doesn't progress from here until a problem is identified).
- Pass out Neighborhood Watch brochures on home security and Neighborhood Watch window stickers (the Co-op representative will provide these).
- The Co-op or police representative will explain the purpose and function of the Neighborhood Watch program.
- Select a captain and at least one co-captain (assistant captain), depending upon the number of people in your proposed group; you should have at least one co-captain for each five to seven residences represented.

- Those who are still interested in forming the Group should each complete an Individual Application.
- Select a name for your Group that is representative of the geographical area involved. This will typically be the name of the subdivision or major road in your area. (The Co-op representative will help with this.) Your Captain should complete the Application for Watch Group Charter and include on the group application the names of everyone submitting an Individual Application. All applications (group and individual) should be given to the representative for delivery to the officers for processing.
- Establish a telephone tree. All neighbors write down their name, address, and phone numbers for the captain and each co-captain. If your Watch area is larger than a single block, you should have a co-captain responsible for overseeing each block in your Watch area. The captain and each co-captain should be responsible for a specified portion of your entire roster.
- Select places for the city to erect Neighborhood Watch signs. There should be a sign at each access point into your Watch area.
- Establish a schedule for regular meetings of your Watch Group (monthly recommended).
- Discuss what you would like to talk about in future meetings (home security, fire safety, personal safety, juvenile problems).

How to Complete the Application for Watch Group Charter


Parkersburg / Wood County
Neighborhood Watch Co-Op
Application for Watch Group Charter
❑ New Charter ❑ Annual Renewall
❑ Proposed or ❑ Existing Name of Watch Group (should be descriptive of the geographical area served by the Group)
Describe the geographical area served by the Group (Example: Maynard Street between Cherry Lane and Mulberry Avenue)
Contact information for Group leadership
CAPTAIN
CO-CAPTAIN
CO-CAPTAIN
GROUP MEMBERS: List the full name of each current or proposed member of this Watch Group (except those listed above). If this is a new application for charter, attach a completed individual application for each member. If this is application for an annual charter renewal, attach an application for each new member who has *not* previously submitted an individual application. Indicate *new members* with an asterisk.
CERTIFICATION: I/we have received, read, understand, and agree to comply with the "Guidelines For Neighborhood Watch Captains." I/we certify under penalty of purjury that I/we have never been convicted of any felony, nor have I/we ever been convicted of any misdemeanor involving theft, dishonesty, violence, or sexual misconduct, and I/we authorize the Parkersburg Police Department and/or Wood County Sheriff's Office to conduct a standard criminal background check to confirm this fact.
Rev 10/13/17

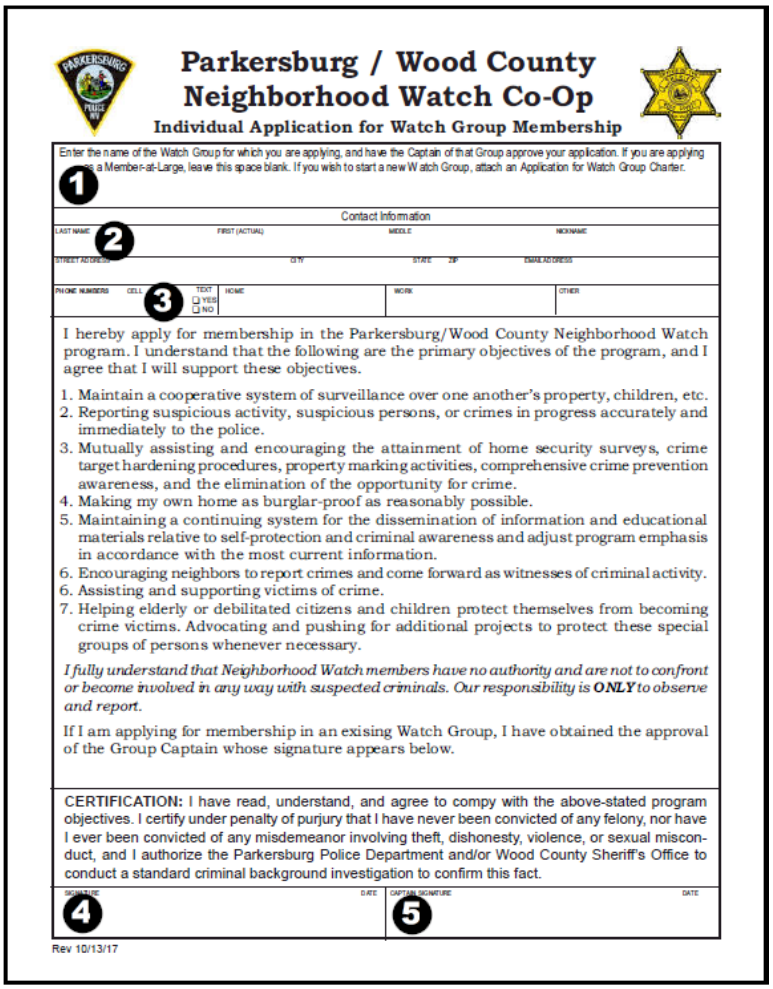
1. Check if this is an application for a new charter or your annual charter renewal.
2. If this is an application for a new charter, check "Proposed." If this is your annual charter renewal, check "Existing." Enter the proposed or existing name of your Watch Group.
3. Describe the geographical area that your Watch Group will cover. For example: "900 block of Smith Street"; "1000 block of Smith Street and 600 block of Jones Street."
4. Enter the complete name and street address of your Group Captain.
5. Enter the Cell and Home phone numbers. Check whether your cell phone can receive SMS Text messages. Enter your work phone *only* if you will be the person who answers the phone. (Our automated notification system will call the number with a recorded message. If some other employee answers the phone, it will be confusing.) Enter an "Other" phone if you can receive recorded messages on a different phone.

6&7. Enter the same information for your Co-Captains.

8. List the name of each member of your Watch Group. If this is an application for a new charter, submit an Individual Application for each member.
9. Captain and Co-Captain(s) sign and date the application.
10. Submit the completed application to any officer of the Co-op.

How to Complete the Individual Application

1. Enter the name of the Watch Group for which you are applying.
2. Enter your complete name and physical address (not PO box).
3. Enter the Cell and Home phone numbers. Check whether your cell phone can receive SMS Text messages. Enter your work phone *only* if you will be the person who answers the phone. (Our automated notification system will call the number with a recorded message. If some other employee were to answer the phone, it would be confusing.) Enter an "Other" phone if you can receive recorded messages on a different phone.
4. Sign and date your application and return it you're your Watch Group Captain.
5. Watch Group Captain sign and date the application and submit it along with your Application for Group Charter.



Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-Op

Individual Application for Watch Group Membership

Enter the name of the Watch Group for which you are applying, and have the Captain of that Group approve your application. If you are applying as a Member-at-Large, leave this space blank. If you wish to start a new Watch Group, attach an Application for Watch Group Charter.

1

Contact Information

LAST NAME 2 FIRST (ACTUAL) MIDDLE NICKNAME

STREET ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP EMAIL ADDRESS

PHONE NUMBERS CELL 3 TEXT ☐ YES ☐ NO HOME WORK OTHER

I hereby apply for membership in the Parkersburg/Wood County Neighborhood Watch program. I understand that the following are the primary objectives of the program, and I agree that I will support these objectives.

1. Maintain a cooperative system of surveillance over one another's property, children, etc.
2. Reporting suspicious activity, suspicious persons, or crimes in progress accurately and immediately to the police.
3. Mutually assisting and encouraging the attainment of home security surveys, crime target hardening procedures, property marking activities, comprehensive crime prevention awareness, and the elimination of the opportunity for crime.
4. Making my own home as burglar-proof as reasonably possible.
5. Maintaining a continuing system for the dissemination of information and educational materials relative to self-protection and criminal awareness and adjust program emphasis in accordance with the most current information.
6. Encouraging neighbors to report crimes and come forward as witnesses of criminal activity.
6. Assisting and supporting victims of crime.
7. Helping elderly or debilitated citizens and children protect themselves from becoming crime victims. Advocating and pushing for additional projects to protect these special groups of persons whenever necessary.

I fully understand that Neighborhood Watch members have no authority and are not to confront or become involved in any way with suspected criminals. Our responsibility is ***ONLY*** *to observe and report.*

If I am applying for membership in an exising Watch Group, I have obtained the approval of the Group Captain whose signature appears below.

CERTIFICATION: I have read, understand, and agree to compy with the above-stated program objectives. I certify under penalty of purjury that I have never been convicted of any felony, nor have I ever been convicted of any misdemeanor involving theft, dishonesty, violence, or sexual misconduct, and I authorize the Parkersburg Police Department and/or Wood County Sheriff's Office to conduct a standard criminal background investigation to confirm this fact.

SIGNATURE DATE 4 CAPTAIN SIGNATURE 5 DATE

Rev 10/13/17

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

APPLYING FOR A WATCH GROUP CHARTER RENEWAL

POLICY

A Neighborhood Watch Charter is how a local Neighborhood Watch Group becomes recognized by the law enforcement agency in whose jurisdiction the neighborhood is located, and by the Parkersburg and Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op. Each group applying to become a chartered Watch Group must complete, submit, and have approved an Application for Watch Group Charter, along with an Individual Application for member of the new Watch Group.

Each chartered Watch Group must submit an Annual Renewal Application for Watch Group Charter each year not later than the second regular meeting of the Co-op. Watch Groups which fail to submit their Annual Renewal Application on time will be dropped from active membership in the Co-op until such time as the Renewal Application is received and approved by the Board of Directors.

FORMS YOU WILL NEED

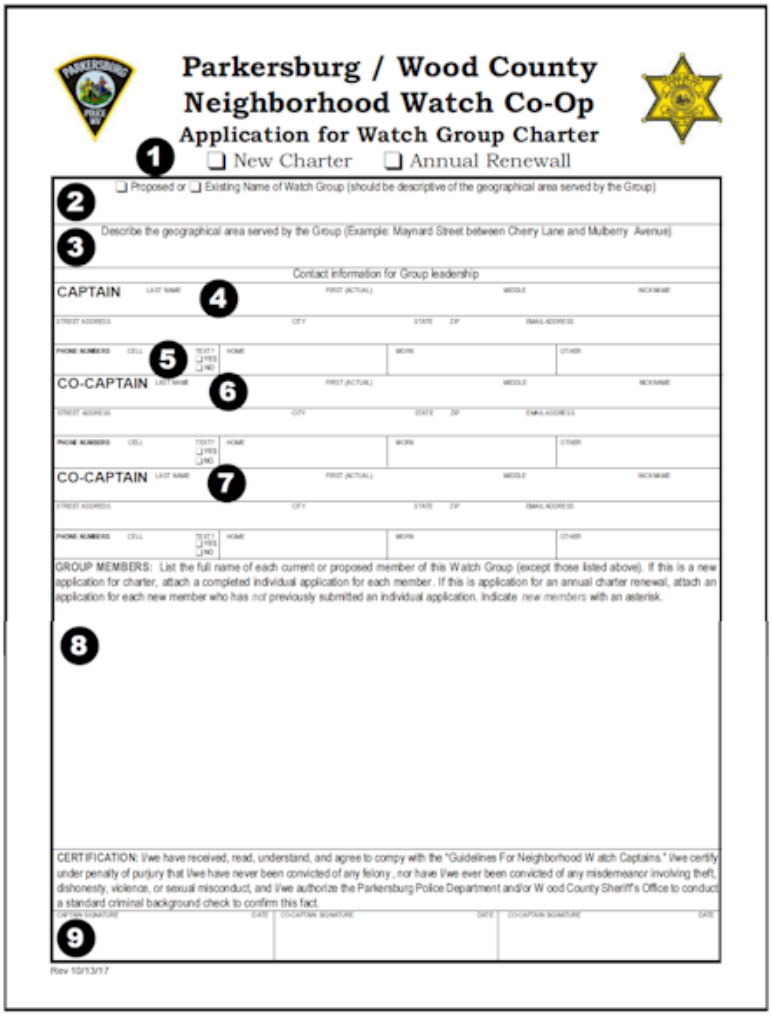
Both forms can be downloaded from our website.

- Application for Watch Group Charter
- Individual Application for each *new* member of your Watch Group

PROCEDURE

Submit your Annual Renewal Application at or prior to the first annual Co-op Meeting each year, along with an Individual Application for each new member of your Watch Group for which an Individual Application has not yet been submitted. Attach a copy of your current roster, being sure to include ***complete*** contact information for each member: name, address, home phone number, cell phone number (indicating whether the member is equipped to receive SMS test messages on this phone) and email address. If the member is a licensed Amateur Radio operator, include the call sign.

How to Complete the Application for Watch Group Charter Renewal


Parkersburg / Wood County
Neighborhood Watch Co-Op
Application for Watch Group Charter
1 ❑ New Charter ❑ Annual Renewall
2 ❑ Proposed or ❑ Existing Name of Watch Group (should be descriptive of the geographical area served by the Group)
3 Describe the geographical area served by the Group (Example: Maynard Street between Cherry Lane and Mulberry Avenue)
Contact information for Group leadership
CAPTAIN 4
5
CO-CAPTAIN 6
CO-CAPTAIN 7
GROUP MEMBERS: List the full name of each current or proposed member of this Watch Group (except those listed above). If this is a new application for charter, attach a completed individual application for each member. If this is application for an annual charter renewal, attach an application for each new member who has *not* previously submitted an individual application. Indicate *new members* with an asterisk.
8
CERTIFICATION: I/we have received, read, understand, and agree to compy with the "Guidelines For Neighborhood W atch Captains." I/we certify under penalty of purjury that I/we have never been convicted of any felony , nor have I/we ever been convicted of any misdemeanor involving theft, dishonesty, violence, or sexual misconduct, and I/we authorize the Parkersburg Police Department and/or W ood County Sheriff's Office to conduct a standard criminal background check to confirm this fact.
9
Rev 10/13/17

1. Check the "Annual Renewal" box on your application form.
2. Check "Existing" and enter the name of your Watch Group.
3. Describe the geographical area that your Watch Group will cover. For example: "900 block of Smith Street"; "1000 block of Smith Street and 600 block of Jones Street."
4. Enter the complete name and street address of your Group Captain.
5. Enter the Cell and Home phone numbers. Check whether your cell phone can receive SMS Text messages. Enter your work phone *only* if you will be the person who answers the phone. (Our automated notification system will call the number with a recorded message. If some other employee answers the phone, it will be confusing.) Enter an "Other" phone if you can receive recorded messages on a different phone.

6&7. Enter the same information for your Co-Captains.

8. List the name of each *new* member of your Watch Group for whom you have not previously submitted an Individual Application. Attach a copy of your current roster, being sure to include ***complete*** contact information for each member: name, address, home phone number, cell phone number (indicating whether the member is equipped to receive SMS test messages on this phone) and email address. If the member is a licensed Amateur Radio operator, include the call sign.
9. Captain and Co-Captain(s) sign and date the application.
10. Submit the completed application to any officer of the Co-op.

How to Complete the Individual Application

1. Enter the name of the Watch Group for which you are applying.
2. Enter your complete name and physical address (not PO box).
3. Enter the Cell and Home phone numbers. Check whether your cell phone can receive SMS Text messages. Enter your work phone *only* if you will be the person who answers the phone. (Our automated notification system will call the number with a recorded message. If some other employee answers the phone, it will be confusing.) Enter an "Other" phone if you can receive recorded messages on a different phone.
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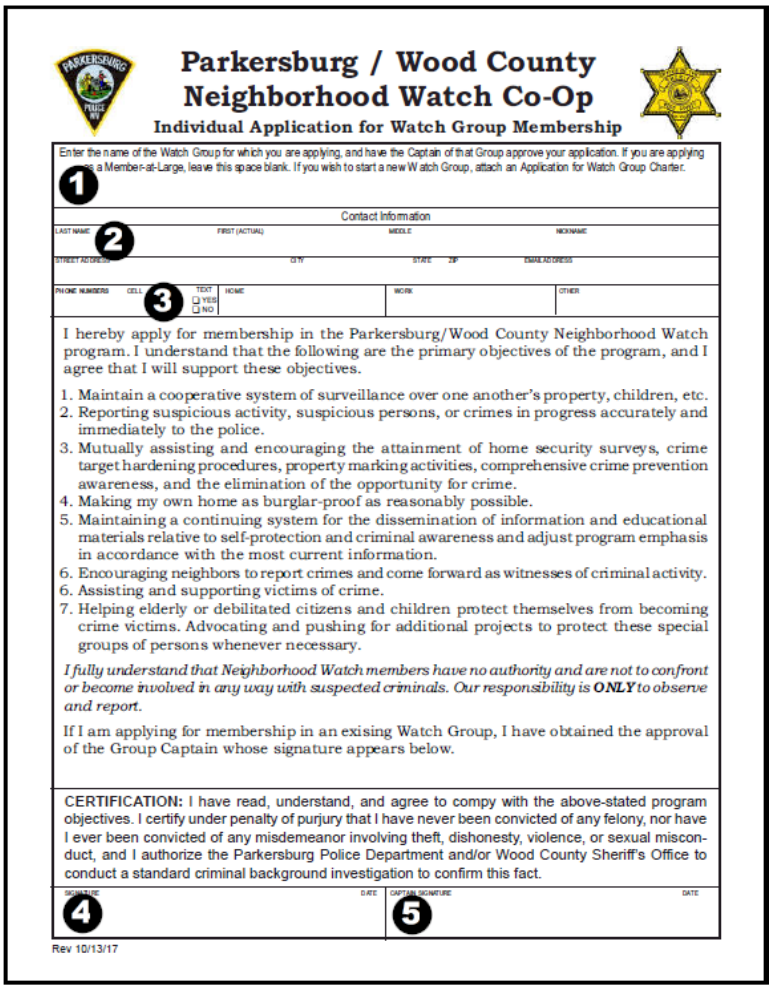
5. Watch Group Captain sign and date the application and submit it along with your Application for Group Charter.



Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-Op

Individual Application for Watch Group Membership

Enter the name of the Watch Group for which you are applying, and have the Captain of that Group approve your application. If you are applying as a Member-at-Large, leave this space blank. If you wish to start a new Watch Group, attach an Application for Watch Group Charter.

1

Contact Information

LAST NAME 2 FIRST (ACTUAL) MIDDLE NICKNAME

STREET ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP EMAIL ADDRESS

PHONE NUMBERS CELL 3 TEXT ☐ YES ☐ NO HOME WORK OTHER

I hereby apply for membership in the Parkersburg/Wood County Neighborhood Watch program. I understand that the following are the primary objectives of the program, and I agree that I will support these objectives.

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4. Making my own home as burglar-proof as reasonably possible.
5. Maintaining a continuing system for the dissemination of information and educational materials relative to self-protection and criminal awareness and adjust program emphasis in accordance with the most current information.
6. Encouraging neighbors to report crimes and come forward as witnesses of criminal activity.
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CERTIFICATION: I have read, understand, and agree to compy with the above-stated program objectives. I certify under penalty of purjury that I have never been convicted of any felony, nor have I ever been convicted of any misdemeanor involving theft, dishonesty, violence, or sexual misconduct, and I authorize the Parkersburg Police Department and/or Wood County Sheriff's Office to conduct a standard criminal background investigation to confirm this fact.

SIGNATURE 4 DATE CAPTAIN SIGNATURE 5 DATE

Rev 10/13/17

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

APPROVING A WATCH GROUP CHARTER

POLICY

Membership in the Co-op is open to any resident of Wood County, West Virginia, who expresses a desire to participate in the goals and objectives of the Co-op, *provided that the resident has never been convicted of a serious felony or crime of violence.* All applications for membership are subject to review and approval or disapproval by the Directors. All members must be affiliated with a chartered Watch Group and active in the function of that Group.

Any individual wishing to charter a Neighborhood Watch Group as a member of this Co-op must submit an Application for Charter in addition to an Individual Application for each member of the Group. This will usually be done at an initial organizational meeting of the group that is attended by one of the Co-op officers and a representative of the appropriate law enforcement agency for that neighborhood. No Watch Group will be chartered by this Co-op until this procedure has been completed. The Charter for each Watch Group must be renewed each calendar year to ensure the membership database remains current.

PROCEDURE

1. The Co-op Officer (usually the President) receiving the Application for Charter will review the application and ensure that:
    a. all required information is provided,
    b. the Captain and Co-Captain(s) of the proposed Watch Group have signed the Application, and
    c. that there is a signed and approved Individual Application for each person named on the Application for Charter.
2. If there is any question about an individual's eligibility for membership, the President will cause the Individual Application to be submitted to the appropriate law enforcement agency for a background check, the necessity for which to be determined by law enforcement.
3. The Co-op President, Vice President, and Secretary will sign and date the Application for Charter and forward it and the associated Individual Applications to the IT Coordinator.
4. The IT Coordinator will enter the approved Watch Group and each individual member into the membership database and the Everbridge notification system and prepare a Certificate of Charter to be signed by the President and Vice President.
5. The President and Vice President will sign the Certificate of Charter and cause it to be delivered to the Watch Group Captain.

ANNUAL RENEWAL

In January of each year each Watch Captain must submit a Renewal Application for Charter for his/her watch group. The only Individual Applications that need to be attached to the renewal application are for new members since the original or most recent renewal Application for Charter was submitted.

PROCEDURE

1. The Co-op Officer (usually the President) receiving the Application for Charter Renewal will review the application and ensure that:
    a. all required information is provided,
    b. the Captain and Co-Captain(s) of the Watch Group has/have signed the Application, and
    c. that there is a signed and approved Individual Application for each new member named on the Application for Charter Renewal.
2. If there is any question about a new individual's eligibility for membership, the President will cause the Individual Application to be submitted to the appropriate law enforcement agency for a background check, the necessity for which to be determined by law enforcement.
3. The Co-op President, Vice President, and Secretary will sign and date the Application for Charter Renewal and forward it and the associated Individual Applications to the IT Coordinator.
4. The IT Coordinator will enter the approved Watch Group and each individual member into the membership database and the Everbridge notification system and prepare a new Certificate of Charter to be signed by the President and Vice President.
5. The President and Vice President will sign the new Certificate of Charter and cause it to be delivered to the Watch Group Captain.

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

How to Observe and Report

"WE LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER" is the key to Neighborhood Watch success.

FORM REQUIRED

Incident Report Form

OBSERVATION

Observation, looking out for each other, is a skill honed through diligent practice. Watching includes both *seeing* suspicious activity and *listening* for suspicious sound. For all *life-threatening* emergencies, *immediately* call 911. To contact police, fire department, or ambulance for *non*-life-threatening events, call (304) 485-8501. *When in doubt, call 911.* Here are ten good tips on how to observe:

1. Knowledge

By knowing who belongs in each house, their hours of work, their vehicles, and/or helpers who come into their homes regularly, you can observe what is happening in your neighborhood and easily become suspicious of anything that does not fit your neighbors' habits.

2. Secrecy

Observe as secretly as possible. If something suspicious is happening, do not make the suspicious person aware that you are watching them. Look out for your neighbor — be the eyes, and the ears, of your local law enforcement agency. But remember, you are the eyes and ears, not the strong arm of the law. Never confront a suspect. Call 911.

3. At Home

You are the eyes and ears, not the strong arm, of the law.

Observe from your home. Whether you live in a house, a mobile home, an apartment, or a condominium, you are the one determining which locations are best for observing normal and suspicious activity. Ideal locations for observing include, but are not limited to, upstairs windows, windows that face the street, windows that allow you to observe the alley, garages, back doors, and your neighbors' yards.

4. On Foot

Observe on foot as you walk or jog through your neighborhood. Memorize the check lists of Suspicious Activities and Sounds. Be alert to anything unusual happening in your neighborhood. Know your neighbors and your neighborhood. Practice what you have memorized by mentally reviewing what you know as you pass each neighbor's house.

5. Car or Bicycle

Observe by car or bicycle. This method of observation takes you further from your home and you must rely on your knowledge of Suspicious Activities and Sounds. Practice what is needed to report a Suspect Vehicle or Person. Practice license number memorization. Be alert and be prepared to call your police or sheriff if you recognize anything suspicious.

6. Be Prepared

Prepare yourself by having binoculars, including night vision binoculars. These are especially useful in rural and low-lit areas. A cellular phone will be useful in some areas, a CB or other radio (FRS/GMRS/Amateur) in others. If you are patrolling, which many Neighborhood Watch groups do, these are especially important.

7. At Night

When observing at night, don't look directly at what you are observing. If you look to the side, or above or below what you are observing, your vision will be clearer than if you looked directly at the subject. Also, prepare yourself by having a small, powerful flashlight, if you need to use it without arousing suspicion. Mag-Lite is an especially good brand.

8. Trust Your Judgment

Recognize and understand what you are observing. Practice observation techniques. Put them together with your ability to evaluate, deduct, organize your thinking, and make judgments. Recognize when to call for help. When your judgment (instinct) tells you something wrong is happening or is about to happen, CALL IMMEDIATELY – DON'T HESTITATE.

Suspect Something?
Call immediately!
Don't Hesitate

9. Notes

The written word, with dates, times, and properly written notes, is crucial to your reporting and following up on the criminal activities of any suspects. First, your memory is clearer when you immediately write down, what you see, logging the time of your notes. If you remember something else later, note it also, with the time. Record the suspect's description and activity, any license plate number of a vehicle, anything you might be called upon to report. Always keep a notebook and pen or pencil with you or use the Neighborhood Watch Incident Report form to record your observations.

10. Practice

Practice. Practice. Practice. Like any technique, practice makes perfect. Use your head to assimilate all you are exposed to and evaluate what you see and hear. No athlete, no pilot, no bookkeeper, not anyone, can perform up to their utmost without practice. You will learn a great deal in your Neighborhood Watch training. Practice what you learn.

RECOGNIZING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

What is suspicious and when do you call the police?

Suspicious activity is anything that looks like it could be connected with criminal behavior – someone casing a neighborhood, forcing open a door, grabbing a child, screaming or pounding coming from a nearby residence or apartment, or strong chemical odors

coming from an inappropriate building are but a handful of examples. If the activity is — or appears to be — threatening to property or people, immediately report the suspicious activity by calling 911. Time is critical in apprehending criminals. It is better to be overly suspicious than to let a criminal get away.

Following is a list of suspicious activities and the criminal activity that might be happening:

PEOPLE

A person, persons, groups of young people, adult(s), or gang(s):

- Gathering (loitering) for an extended or unusual period of time.
  Possible burglary, arson, or drug dealing.
- Behaving strangely.
  Possibly on drugs or preparing to do some illegal activity.
- With any sort of weapon.
  Possibly planning any number of crimes. But remember that in West Virginia it is perfectly legal for an adult to wear a sidearm, either openly or concealed.
- Carrying, concealing, or transporting anything unusual.
  Possibly burglar carrying stolen property.
- Looking into cars.
  Possibly casing cars for theft of car or its contents.
- Wearing clothing, bandannas, caps, or other attire that could spell trouble.
  Possible gang activity.
- Selling or conducting business on a street corner, park, or other place where business is not licensed.
  Possibly selling drugs or stolen property.
- Running, especially if carrying something of value.
  Possible suspect fleeing scene of crime.
- Running, especially at night, for no apparent reason.
  Possible suspect fleeing scene of crime.
- Creating any type of disturbance.
  Disturbing the Peace or covering up noise of some other activity.
- Going door to door, especially if someone goes to the rear of the residence.
  Possibly casing the neighborhood.
- Loitering around schools, parks, or on your street.
  Possible burglar, sex offense, drugs, or arson.
- Creating much foot traffic to and from a particular place, short visits.
  Possible drugs, vice, or "fencing" (selling/ buying stolen property) operation.
- Screaming for help.
  Possible rape, medical emergency, robbery, assault, or fire.
- Offering items for sale at extremely low prices.
  Possibly trying to sell stolen property.

- An older man with young females or teenagers in an unusual place or for an unusual period of time.
  Possible sex crimes of seeking or pimping (soliciting customers) for the youngsters.

The list is endless. Anyone doing anything that looks suspicious should be reported. *Trust your instincts. Call immediately! Don't Hesitate*

VEHICLES

- An occupied vehicle parked for a long period of time.
  Possibly casing the neighborhood.
- A vehicle driving around your neighborhood repeatedly, short visits.
  Possibly casing the neighborhood, operating as a point for drug dealing, a sexual deviate, or child molester waiting for their target, being a get-away car.
- Vehicle being loaded with valuables if parked by closed business or unoccupied house.
  Possible burglary in progress.
- A parked car with the engine running.
  Possible get-away car for burglary.
- Departing from a location at night with its lights off.
  Possible burglar, assault violation, or robber.
- Driving in a reckless manner or committing other serious traffic violations; problems driving their vehicle, especially if it is an expensive model.
  Possible stolen vehicle.
- The vehicle is in unusually bad condition, with signs of a recent accident, broken windows, or bullet holes in the car.
  P*ossibly involved in drive-by shooting or a hit and run accident.*
- Business is being conducted out of the vehicle.
  Possibly selling stolen items or drugs.
- An over-loaded vehicle that is heavily weighed down, parked, or traveling in your neighborhood.
  Possible burglar.
- Persons detaching mechanical parts or accessories from vehicle.
  Possible theft or vandalism in progress.
- Abandoned vehicle parked on block.
  Possible stolen vehicle.
- Someone being forced into a vehicle.
  Possible kidnapping, assault, or attempted rape.
- Odd property seen in vehicles, such as TVs, stereos, weapons.
  Possible stolen property.
- Locked vehicle that someone is trying to forcibly enter.
  Possible theft of car or contents in progress.
- Older children or adults, who are not from the neighborhood, bicycling randomly or repeatedly without a purposeful destination.
  Possible theft from homes and/or garages.

SUSPICIOUS SOUNDS

Using your ears to detect suspicious activities is very helpful in combating crime. Sounds may only last a few seconds and may go undetected. Here are some sounds which require close attention, and reporting:

Screams for Help

Always assume the scream is real and someone desperately needs help. Quickly try to determine the location, source, and nature of the scream and **immediately** call 911. Heroes can be wounded or killed. Remember that apprehension is the job of your police.

Continuous Screaming

This type of screaming probably is a result or someone being beaten, hurt, or mistreated. Especially listen for victim's cries of "Oh's" and "Ow's". Quickly try to determine the location, source, and nature of the scream and immediately call 911.

Screaming and Cursing

This type of screaming is probably a domestic violence incident between husband and wife, parent and child, two people who are intent on hurting each other but not in a life-threatening way. Determine the location, source, and nature of the scream and immediately call 911.

Gun Shot Sounds

Immediately call 911. Provide as much information as to the number of shots and their source (location). Just remember that simple fireworks are common on certain holidays.

Alarms Activated

Fire, home-burglary, business, and car alarms must always be considered as real. Determine the location, source, and nature of the alarm and call 911.

Breaking Glass

If you hear the sound of breaking glass, **immediately** call 911. This is the most common method of forced entry into a home, apartment, or automobile.

Loud Music

Loud music is usually an annoyance, and you can report it as any other nuisance. However, it is often used to cover up other criminal activities. If you hear loud music covering the cry of a screaming person, **immediately** call 911.

Forcing, Prying, or Pounding Sounds

If something is being forced, pried, or pounded you should determine the location, source, and nature of the sounds and if your suspicion is aroused, **immediately** call 911.

Dogs Barking

Continuous barking of a dog in an unusual manner is cause for alarm. Determine the location of the dog and call 911.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Remember that the more witnesses there are to a crime, the better the likelihood that the criminal will be convicted in court. Additionally, each witness sees the event from a different perspective, and each will observe and remember different details of the event.

If you observe a *life-threatening* event, or anything that poses an imminent serious threat to property, immediately call 911 and *then* call your Watch Captain or Co-Captain and/or other Watch members. If the event does not appear to be life-threatening, call your Captain, Co-Captain, or other Watch members and together decide whether to call 911. Remember that while what you are observing may be a crime, it may also be only normal non-criminal activity.

The dispatchers at Wood County Central Communications receive hundreds of calls a day. Most of these calls are actual emergencies, but some are not. Some people who call 911 do not provide the dispatchers with sufficient information for them to know how to efficiently dispatch the needed help. Naturally, the more credible the caller, the more reliable the dispatcher will consider the call. When you need to call 911, be sure to identify yourself to the dispatcher as a member of Neighborhood Watch and be sure to be able to provide the dispatcher with a*ll* the information he or she will need to provide to the responders. *Stay on the line with the dispatcher until you are no longer needed.*

Be sure to always keep your Neighborhood Watch Roster, a pen or pencil, and a Neighborhood Watch Incident Report form or a notebook handy to record your observations.

Suspect Something?
Trust Your Instincts • Don't Hesitate • Call Immediately

COMPLETE AN INCIDENT REPORT

Whenever you call to report a crime or suspicious activity, you should complete an Incident Report form to give to the responding officer. If the officer does not want the report, give it to your Watch Captain to keep on file for possible later reference if and when the case goes to court.

INCIDENT REPORT INSTRUCTIONS

Check the box to indicate whether this was an actual crime or just suspicious activity.

Enter the date and approximate time of the incident (*not* the time you write the report).

Enter the street address or nearest intersection where the incident occurred.

Write a brief description of what happened. If you need more space, continue your description on the back.

Provide the best description you can of each party creating the problem. If there were more than three "problem parties" use an additional report form.

If you know the name of the problem party, write it in; if you don't know their name but know where they live, write in their address. Check whether the person was male or female. Try to estimate the person's age, height, and weight. If you don't think you can come

close to a guess, use descriptions like short, medium, tall, very tall; skinny, thin, medium build, large, fat/obese.

If you can see the person's hair, what color was it? Did the person have any facial hair: moustache, goatee, full beard?

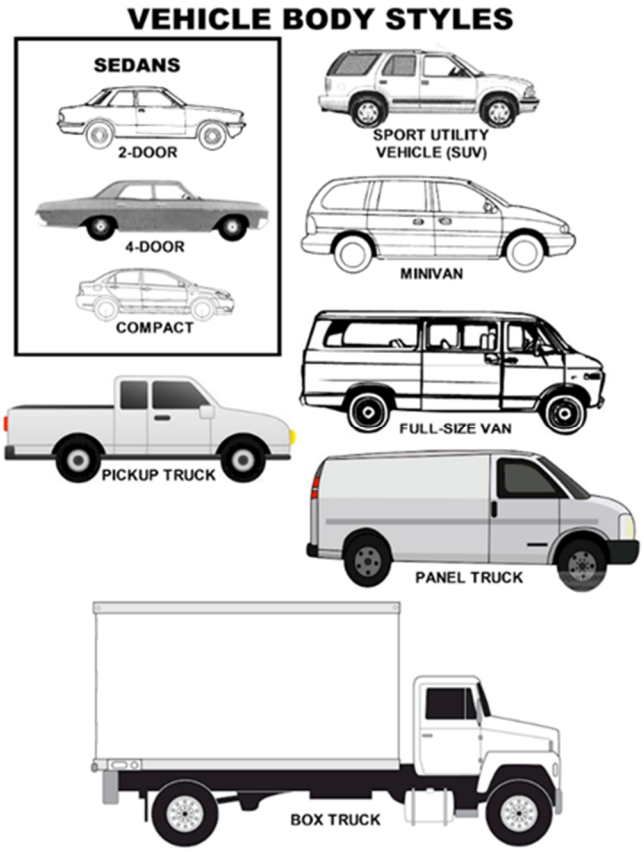
Do your best to describe the person's race/ethnicity. Note any marks, scars, tattoos, or other distinguishing marks or characteristics?

If you heard the person speak, did you notice any kind of accent? Speech impediment? Did the person speak loudly or softly; fast or slowly? Did he/she seem excited, angry, or frightened?

Describe the person's clothing. What color was it? Tee shirt or button-up? If a tee shirt or sweatshirt, was there a picture, logo, or writing on it? Long or short sleeves/pant legs? Light jacket, vest, sweatshirt, hoodie, heavy coat? Leather shoes, tennis shoes, work boots? What color were they? Baseball cap, cowboy hat, toboggan? What color? Any logo or words?

If the person had a weapon, what kind was it? The following pictures illustrate the most common type of firearm you are likely to encounter. Please note that "A.R." does *not* stand for "Assault Rifle." It actually stands for "ArmaLite Rifle" and refers to the first company to manufacture this popular style of sporting rifle in the 1950s. In reality, " assault rifles" are fully automatic (imagine a machine gun), and automatic firearms have been heavily restricted to civilians since 1934.

For the vehicle description, very few people will be able to identify the year, make, and model. If you don't know the year, just indicate if it's new, older, or really old. If you can read the make (Chevrolet, Ford, Dodge, etc.) or model (Astro, Blazer, Impala, Yukon, etc.) of the vehicle, provide that.



This picture illustrates the most common vehicle body styles for comparison.

Try to get the license plate number and the state of issue. If you cannot determine the state, note the color of the license plate, border, and background.

Make a note of any particular identifying dents, scratches, damage (like broken window or taillight), or unusual features of the vehicle. If there are bumper stickers or signs on the vehicle, make a note of what they say.

Note the direction of departure of the problem parties. If you know north, south, east, or west, use that. If you are not sure, indicate toward or away from a landmark. For example: south on Market Street, towards downtown, towards the high school, away from the park.

Obtain the names and addresses of any additional witnesses who are *not* Neighborhood Watch members. Each Watch member who observes the incident should create a separate, complete report.

Use the back of the report form to document any additional details or narrative that needs to be added to complete the report.

Enter your contact information on the bottom of the report. Give your completed report to your Watch Captain, who will make copies: the original goes to our files, one copy goes to the Police Department, and one copy will be returned to you for your personal records.

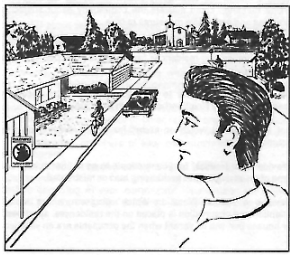
Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

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.

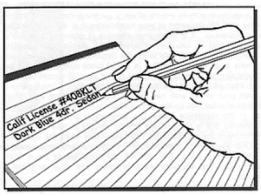
Automobile and Foot Observation

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 may 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.

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

How to Detect Suspicious Activities

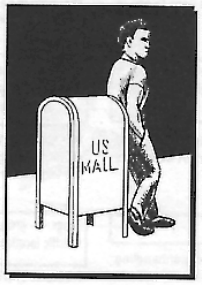
We live in a world where there are unlimited numbers of people, things, and situations that could be considered suspicious. This SOP outlines some general principles regarding what you should consider as a suspicious person, activity, or circumstance.

WHAT IS A SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY?

A suspicious activity occurs when a person's conduct or action *does not* fit the norm of your neighborhood or the surrounding circumstances. It is when your attention is drawn to a person's conduct that is unusual, different, odd, dangerous, appears wrongful, or "just not right" under the circumstances. A suspicious activity is an occurrence that is out of place and should not be happening in your neighborhood under normal circumstances. For example, you see in the middle of the night a truck parked down your street with two people loading furniture and other things of value into it. You further observe that there are no lights on at the residence from which the furniture is being taken. Obviously, this is a suspicious activity. People don't usually move furniture in the middle of the night, especially when the lights are out. If you were to observe such a suspicious activity you should *immediately call law enforcement* as there would be a high probability that burglars were breaking into your neighbor's house.

Appearance of Suspicion

Understand that your interpretation that an activity is suspicious is *in and of itself enough for you to call the police*. There could be, of course, and often are, reasonable explanations for seemingly suspicious activities. Your only duty, however, is to *call the police when you think that something is wrong*. Your local law enforcement officer is the one who will make the determination of whether or not something is wrong. Remember, you are not the one to investigate what you think is suspicious. That is a job for the police. Your responsibility as a Neighborhood Watcher is to let them know about the suspicious activity. *You should call the police any time you think there is something suspicious, dangerous, or wrongful going on. No exceptions!* You do not have to give your name to report your findings to local law enforcement, but we strongly recommend that you give your name, identify yourself as a member of Neighborhood Watch, and wait for law enforcement to arrive in case they have any questions to ask you.



Use Your Intuition

Detecting suspicious activities requires you to make a judgment about what you are observing. *Use your intuition — your gut-level feeling*. If you think or feel something is wrong or suspicious, it probably is. By *using your head*, and *thinking*, you will be able to make a reasonably good judgment about whether an activity is suspicious or not. ***If you are in doubt, call the police.***

COMMON SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Here are some examples of common suspicious activities.

Observation: When a person or vehicle stays in the same location for a long or unusual period of time.	**Possible Activities:** Many kinds of criminal activity could result from this suspicious activity, such as waiting to transact a drug deal, acting as a lookout for a criminal act being committed, a sex deviate waiting to pick up a victim, a criminal "casing" a house, business, or other location as a potential target. On the other hand, the supposed suspicious person may be sick either physically, or mentally and unable to help themselves. On the other hand, it may well be someone waiting to take a person home from work, or it may even be a police stakeout. When in doubt, call the police.
Observation: A person who behaves strangely or whose movements are unusual.	**Possible Activities:** A criminal preparing for or committing a crime. A person under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Someone who is hurt, sick, or injured. Someone mentally deranged or ill.
Observation: A vehicle (car, truck, van, etc.) frequently driving around your block or within a specific area.	**Possible Activities:** It could be a criminal(s) waiting to commit a crime at an appropriate or specific time. The vehicle could be the get-away car for a criminal act being committed or in progress. the vehicle could be driven by a sex offender, trying to pick up a victim.
Observation: People carrying, concealing, or attempting to conceal something suspicious.	**Possible Activities:** Transporting stolen property, concealing a weapon such as a knife or gun, concealing contraband (illegal things like drugs, etc.). *However*, remember that wearing a firearm, either openly or concealed, is perfectly legal within the state of West Virginia and should not be considered suspicious without other extenuating circumstances. Likewise, a person walking down a rural road carrying a long gun (rifle or shotgun) during hunting season is *not* suspicious. On the other hand, a person carrying a long gun in town near a school might very well be considered suspicious. If you are going to err, be sure to err on the side of safety and caution.
Observation: People wearing clothes that are messed up, torn, missing, or their attire (jewelry and personal effects) do not fit the individual.	**Possible Activities:** The person(s) could have recently been involved in a crime either as a perpetrator or a victim. A person who looks like a "bum" could have just stolen some expensive item (piece of jewelry) and is now wearing it.

Observation: A car or other vehicle traveling or parked in your neighborhood that is heavily weighed down and is obviously carrying something heavy or in bulk.	**Possible Activities:** The vehicle is being used to transport, sell, or deliver stolen property to another. A burglar is transporting the property that has just been stolen.
Observation: A person who stops people on the street.	**Possible Activities:** The individual could be panhandling (asking for money — illegal in many states, but legal in Parkersburg and Wood County), or soliciting for sexual acts or prostitution, trying to sell stolen merchandise, or a mentally challenged troublemaker trying to start a fight or other problems. On the other hand, the person may be lost and asking for directions. Keep watching and decide.
Observation: An older man in the company of younger females or teenagers.	**Possible Activities:** Older male serving as a "connection" (i.e., a source of supply for something illegal like alcohol, drugs, etc.). Male may be seeking sex or sexual deviation with underage female (or male). Male is harboring a young female runaway. The older male is pimping (soliciting for prostitution) for the younger girls. On the other hand, it may only be a grandfather out walking with his grandchildren. Keep watching and decide.
Observation: Occupants that are unusually seated in a parked car or moving vehicle. That is, two people in a car, one person seated in the driver's seat and another in the back seat.	**Possible Activities:** Car is being used in the commission of a crime; it could be a get-away car for a robbery in progress. The car may be being used for the transaction of illegal activity like prostitution or drug sales.
Observation: Gangs or groups of young people or adults gathering together at a specific location.	**Possible Activities:** The gang is together to encounter another gang in a "gang fight." A massive group drug transaction is occurring. The group is simply congregating together for no purpose expect to fool around and talk, which usually leads to eventual trouble.
Observation: A person looking into cars and/or moving from car to car.	**Possible Activities:** Person may be looking for an unlocked car to steal cash or objects for sale to buy drugs. Person is looking for property inside the car to steal, attempting to enter the car to steal it, or hiding inside the car to rob the driver or hijack the car.
Observation: A car without its lights on during the night,	**Possible Activities:** The car is arriving for or leaving from the commission of a crime such as a burglary, and the suspect doesn't want the license number or description

that is departing from or arriving at a location.	of the car to be observed. The car is being stolen and the thief wants to keep stealing it as unnoticeably as possible.
Observation: A car that is being driven in a damaged or unusual condition. Damage could be to the front of the car caused by a recent accident; bullet holes in the car; the body of the car is being driven in an obviously unsafe condition.	**Possible Activities:** The car could have just been involved in a hit and run accident or been involved in a crime.
Observation: A driver commits traffic violations, speeding or driving in an erratic or reckless manner.	**Possible Activities:** The driver may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or does not know how to drive a car. The person may be escaping from a crime, or the car has just been stolen. The person driving the car is a reckless driver and has no consideration for public safety or traffic laws.
Observation: An individual who does not fit the car they are driving, or is having trouble operating the car they are driving.	**Possible Activities:** The car has been, or is being, stolen.
Observation: A person(s) transporting something unusual or a valuable object during the night	**Possible Activities:** A burglar carrying away stolen property or things used in the commission of a crime. Transportation of illegal things such as contraband, illegal weapons, or other illegal devices or materials.
Observation: A person who is selling or conducting business out of his car, van, truck, or other vehicle.	**Possible Activities:** Selling drugs, stolen merchandise, or just an unlicensed vendor selling merchandise without a license.
Observation: A car is parked, and the engine is still running.	**Possible Activities:** A getaway car for a crime in progress, such as a robbery. If there are no occupants while the engine is running, it will constitute a vehicle code violation in most states. Or it simply may be someone warming up their car on a cold morning before going to work.
Observation: A person or group of people dressed in criminal attire or clothing that could start or provoke trouble	**Possible Activities:** A person wearing dark clothes, gloves, and black tennis shoes during the night is common attire for a burglar. Person(s) wearing gang insignia, patches, jackets, headbands, or “colors.”

	Person(s) wearing outlaw motorcycle gang jackets, insignia, or other outfits. Religious and political extremists wearing or carrying symbols, insignias, or pictures of their leader that is obviously hostile to the community in general. Person(s) wearing dark glasses during evening hours. Such persons could be under the influence of narcotics or other dangerous drugs.
Observation: A person running at night for no apparent reason.	**Possible Activities:** The person may have just committed a crime or illegal act and is attempting to run away. The person could be the intended victim of a crime fleeing from his attackers. The person could be seeking emergency help for a variety of urgent situations. Or the person may just be jogging at night to avoid the heat of the day.
ACTION THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE	Obtain the description(s) of the individual(s), what they are doing, and what they are wearing. When appropriate, call the police and give them this information.
Immediately call the police if you observe suspicious activities of any kind	

SUSPICIOUS SOUNDS

Sounds are very important clues as to suspicious, criminal, or dangerous activities within your neighborhood. Here is a list of some common sounds you should be aware of.

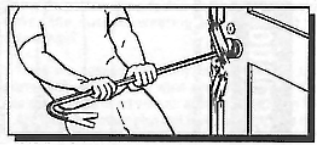
Screaming. Beware if you hear screaming from anyone, especially continuous loud screaming. This probably means that somebody is being hurt, mistreated, or is in trouble. Try to determine where the sound is coming from and *immediately call the police*.

Loud Music. Loud music is not only an annoyance to a neighborhood, but also may be used to cover up someone's wrongful conduct, such as domestic violence. Beware is you all of a sudden hear screaming or yelling immediately followed by loud music. *Immediately call the police.*

Yelling for Help. When you hear someone yelling for help, always assume it is real and that the person needs help. Try to determine where the person is, what his/her problem is, and then *immediately call the police*.

An Alarm Going Off. Fire, burglar, and car alarms, etc., should be investigated as real (not a "false alarm") until the police have investigated the situation and determined otherwise.

Breaking Glass. Beware if you hear the sound of breaking glass, as this is a common method used by criminals to gain entry into houses or vehicles.



Prying, Pounding, or Forcing Sounds. Any sound that indicates that something is being pried, pounded, forced, or broken should immediately arouse your suspicions.

Someone Being Hit or Beaten. *Immediately call the police* if you hear what appears to be someone being hit, beaten, or knocked around by another; sounds like "Oh's" or "Ow's," etc.

Gun Shot Sounds. Any sounds that appear to be that of gun shots should be reported to the police, but be especially cautious between July 1 and July 5. If it sounds like fireworks on these days, it is probably fireworks.

IMMEDIATELY CALL THE POLICE IF YOU OBSERVE SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES OF ANY KIND

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

OBTAIN DETAILS ABOUT THE SUSPECT(S)

RELATED FORMS

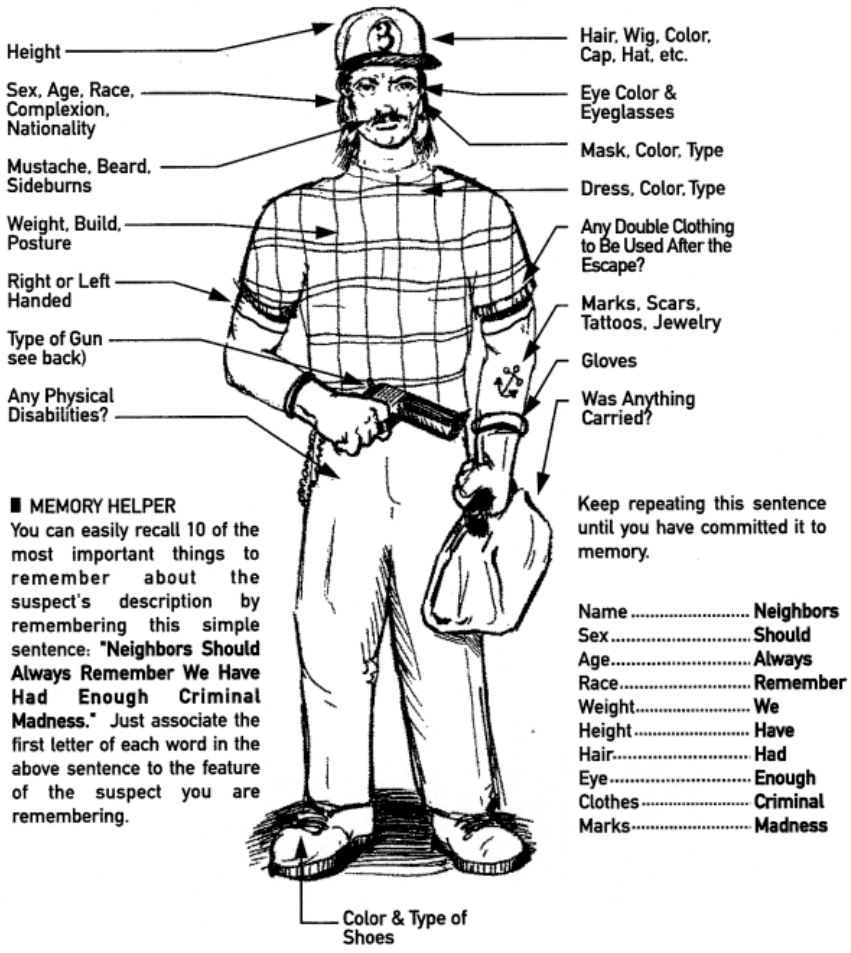
- Suspect Identification Form
- Incident Report Form

HOW TO GET A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF A SUSPECT

It is important that Neighborhood Watchers be able to give the police the most accurate description of the suspicious person as possible.

To help call the 10 most important things to notice about the suspect's description, memorize this simple sentence: "**N**eighbors **S**hould **A**lways **R**emember **W**e **H**ave **H**ad **E**nough **C**riminal **M**adness. Just associate the first letter of each word in the sentence to the feature of the suspect you are remembering."

Neighbors	**N**ame
Should	**S**ex
Always	**A**ge
Remember	**R**ace
We	**W**eight
Have	**H**eight
Had	**H**air
Enough	**E**yes



Try to obtain the following detailed information about each suspect:

Name: If you hear the suspect's name, try to remember it. Also, any other kinds of information about the suspect such as: nickname(s), where he/she lives, hangouts, place and kind of employment, any other information that would help identify and locate the suspect.

Sex: Although this might seem obvious, today there are many cases in which a suspect disguises him/ herself to appear as the opposite gender so the real identity will not be known.

Race: You should note and remember the nationality or origin of the suspects by accent, dress, behavior, or mannerisms.

Height: Try to make the best estimation of the suspect's height by comparing him to your own height or that of someone you know. For example, the suspect is shorter, about the same height, or taller than I am. Another way is to estimate the height compared to the height of a nearby stationary object. For example, the suspect's head was just below the height of the red van he was standing next to.

Age: Determining the age with any kind of real accuracy is very difficult. Just make the best general determination you can, such as kid, teenager, young adult, mid-20s, middle aged, senior, etc.

Hair: Observe and describe the following characteristics of the suspect's hair. What is the color? Is it long or short? What hairstyle or which side is it parted on? Straight, wavy, curly? Do you think the suspect may be wearing a wig? Is the suspect bald? If so, what part of the head. Be sure to include any facial hard. Beard, goatee, mustache? Is the suspect wearing a hat, cap, scarf, or headband? Try to describe it.

Eyes: The color of the suspect's eyes and other characteristics of the eyes like a "black eye," watery or bloodshot eyes, patch over one eye, etc. Was the suspect wearing eye-glasses, sunglasses, or contact lenses? (Some contact lenses change the eye color.)

Clothes: What is the color, type, style, condition (old, new, torn, bloodstained, etc.) of the suspect's pants, shirt, dress, coat, jacket, etc.? Was the suspect wearing any jewelry or other recognizable things?

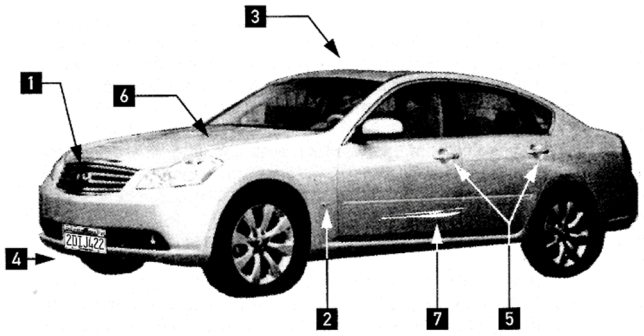
Marks: Does the suspect have any marks such as tattoos, scars, or deformities? And if so, in what specific location (i.e., the suspect has a tattoo of a heart with an arrow through it on his left forearm)? Are there other physical characteristics such as a limp or unusual posture that would contribute to the description of the suspect?

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

How to Obtain a Vehicle Description

When you observe a suspicious, unusual, or criminal act involving a vehicle, it is very important that you obtain the best possible description and the license plate number of that vehicle. You need to be as accurate as you can in describing the vehicle so the police will be able to locate it and the suspicious person(s) involved.

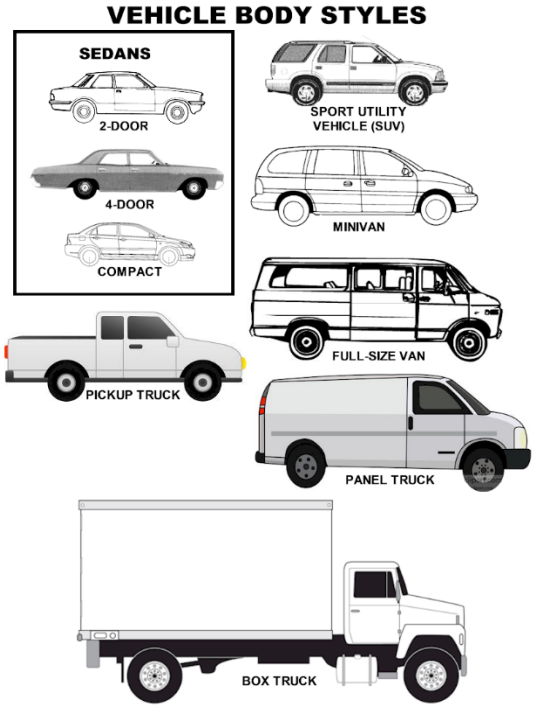


1. Make - Chevrolet, Ford, Buick, etc.
2. Model- Mustang, Accord, Camry, etc.
3. Auto Type - Sedan, truck, van, etc.
4. License Plate - State and number
5. Body Style - Convertible, two-door, four-door, etc.
6. Color - What color(s) and shade(s) of color
7. Other Identifying Features - Decals, dents, broken windows, etc.
8. Year - Estimate if you don't know; e.g., new, late model, old, older model

MEMORY HELPER

You can remember a car or vehicle description by learning the simple word "CLAMMY." Here is how to remember. Just say the word CLAMMY and remember to associate each letter of the word with these values:

- **C**olor - Try to be as specific as you can regarding the color. For example, if you see a car that is blue in color, remember if it is light or dark blue. Also, describe, if you can, whether the vehicle is multi-colored or two-tone in color.
- **L**icense Plate - See the section on license plates below
- **A**uto Type - What kind of vehicle is it? Car, sports car, SUV, van, camper, motor home, pick-up truck, moving van, box truck, flatbed truck, Jeep (or other "off-road" vehicle, motorcycle, etc.



- **M**ake of Vehicle - The "make" is the manufacturer: Chevy, Ford, Chrysler, Honda, Volvo, Volkswagen, Buick, BMW, etc.

- **M**odel of Vehicle - The model is the particular style of vehicle the manufacturer makes; e.g., Accord, Camry, Mustang, Wrangler, etc.
- **Y**ear of Manufacture - What is the year of the vehicle? If you don't know, tell the police that you are only estimating what you think the year of the vehicle is. If you don't know the year of the vehicle, just make a general estimate such as: a new car, a late model, a couple of years old, an old car, a "beater."

Other Identifying Features. Are there any other identifying features that stand out about this vehicle, such as significant dents or other body damage, bumper stickers or other decals, highly tinted windows, broken windows, or anything else that would help describe and identify the vehicle?

LICENSE PLATE NUMBERS

Your ability to observe and remember the license plate number of a vehicle involved in suspicious or criminal activity is vitally important for your police department to know.

Write Down the License Number. When you first observe a suspicious vehicle, immediately write down the vehicle description and license plate number exactly as you have observed it. Write down complete vehicle description (body style, color, make, model, color, etc.). Write down the license number from left to right. Be careful to not transpose or change the numbers and letters around when writing. If you can't get all the information, just get the best description you can. If you are carrying a smart phone, use your notepad app to record the information and take a picture when possible.

State Which Issued the License Plate. Make sure to remember and note the state that issued the license plate. Be familiar with your neighboring state's license plates and how to recognize them. If you observe an out-of-state plate, be sure to tell the police what state it is from. If you can't tell what state, describe the color of the plate's background and numbers, plus anything else that you can remember, such as a Georgia peach, Ohio buckeye, or Florida orange. Also remember that some states require plates on both the front and back of the vehicle; remembering if there was a plate on the front will help the police narrow down the issuing state.

No License Plate on Vehicle. Sometimes suspicious vehicles that are used in the commission of criminal activity (like a getaway car) have the license plate removed to make it more difficult to identify the vehicle. You should *always* be suspicious of any vehicle that does not have a license plate. In this case, provide the best possible description you can of the vehicle and its occupants.

WEST VIRGINIA LICENSE PLATE STYLES

West Virginia has numerous styles of special and personalized license places. Neighborhood Watchers in West Virginia should become familiar with these various styles in order to effectively report them to law enforcement.

MEMORIZING LICENSE PLATE NUMBERS

It is important that you are able to memorize a license plate number quickly since you may not have time to write it down. You can train yourself to do this with a little practice and the help of memorizing the phonetic alphabet used by law enforcement. All the emergency service agencies in Wood County use the standard military phonetic alphabet; many

other jurisdictions use what is considered a national "standard" law enforcement phonetic alphabet.

Most license plates consist of a cluster of letters and numbers that constitute the full plate number. For example, the license plate number "ADM836" has an alphabetical cluster of "ADM" and a numerical cluster of "836". It will be easier for you to observe and recall the license plate number by breaking the plate down into these alphabetical and numerical parts. You would first observe the "ADM" (from the left of the plate) and then moving to the right to the numbers "836." The license plate number "390 IZD" would be read phonetically (in Wood County) as "thuh-*ree nie*-yen *zee*-roh (not "oh") India Zulu Delta." Note that it is often difficult to distinguish between a numeric zero and an alphabetic letter "O" (oh).

Remember, when memorizing the license plate number to read it from left to right. Also, try to remember license plate frames that have a personalized message and report that information to law enforcement.

The Phonetic Alphabet

For clarity in verbal communication and the avoidance of transmission errors, the phonetic alphabet is used by law enforcement and other emergency services, as well as in military and amateur radio communications world-wide. This phonetic alphabet will also help you recall license plate numbers through the association of the license plate letters to the phonetic named object or person represented by the letters. The more your mind can associate something with something else, the better it will remember or recall. For example, the license plate number "167 MTW" would be easily recalled by saying to yourself, "one six seven Mike Tango Whisky." However, you might be able to remember is more readily by using something that is ridiculous (and thus easier to remember) like, "a hundred and sixty seven my tomato won." For some people, the mind will associate "167" (a hundred sixty-seven) as a single number (one thing to remember) instead of three separate numbers (things) to remember. The dumber the phrase sounds, the easier it will be to remember. If you get the wrong word, it isn't the end of the world. Any word that starts with the correct letter will be very helpful when calling 911.

Military Phonetic Alphabet **(Used in Wood County)**			
A - Alpha	H - Hotel	O - Oscar	V - Victor
B - Bravo	I - India	P - Papa	W - Whisky
C - Charley	J - Juliet	Q - Quebec	X - X-ray
D – Delta	K - Kilo	R - Romeo	Y - Yankee
E - Echo	L - Lima	S - Sierra	Z – Zulu
F - Foxtrot	M - Mike	T - Tango	
G - Golf	N - November	U - Uniform	

Standard Police Phonetic Alphabet (Used by Many Jurisdictions)			
A - Adam	H - Henry	O - Ocean	V - Victor
B - Boy	I - Ida	P - Paul	W - William
C - Charles	J - John	Q - Queen	X - X-ray
D - David	K - King	R - Robert	Y - Young
E - Edward	L - Lincoln	S - Sam	Z - Zebra
F - Frank	M - Mary	T - Tom	
G - Georg	N - Nora	U - Union	

Beware of Covered Plates

Be suspicious when you can't read the license plate number of a vehicle because it is covered, dirty, damaged, or has letters/numbers taped over the original plate. Obtain the best description of the vehicle and call the police. Tell them about the license plate, how it has been covered or obstructed, and why you can't read it.

Practice Exercise

You can become good at remembering license plate numbers with just a little practice. First study and memorize the phonetic alphabet used in your jurisdiction. While you are riding or driving in a car, practice observing license plates and then say to yourself, "This license plate number (WVT972) is Whisky Victor Tango Nine Seven Two." The more often you do this exercise, the more readily you will be able to memorize license plate numbers.

West Virginia Special Plates

West Virginia has several special-plate series that have a two-character prefix to the basic number, and these need a special method of reporting. Here are three examples. Left to right are the Sesquicentennial (150th Anniversary), Classic Car, and Whitewater Rafting plates. These would be pronounced and reported to law enforcement as follows: "Sesquicentennial [or just "SQ"] plate Sierra over Quebec zero zero zero zero zero zero;" "Classic Car plate Charley over Charley one five five seven;" and "Whitewater plate Whisky over Romeo zero zero zero zero."

150th Anniversary | Classic Car | Whitewater Rafting

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

CALLING LAW ENFORCEMENT

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

Whenever it becomes necessary for you to call emergency services, *you must first determine* whether or not this is an actual *emergency*. An ***emergency*** exists when law enforcement, fire, or emergency medical assistance is necessary to save a life, prevent a serious injury, prevent serious property damage, stop/prevent a crime that is happening or about to happen, or respond to a crime that has *just* happened. Under a valid emergency situation, time is of the essence and an immediate response can make the difference between life and death. In any emergency, *immediately call 911*. If you need to report circumstances to the police that do *not* constitute an emergency, use the non-emergency number. In Wood County that number is (304) 485-8501. However, ***when in doubt, call 911***.

IT'S OK TO BE WRONG

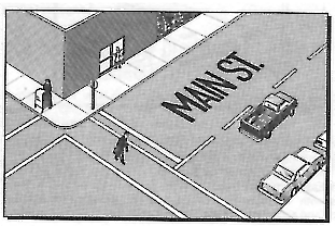
Your local law enforcement agencies and 911 dispatchers know and understand that their citizens can't always be right about what they think is a suspicious or wrongful activity. All that they ask is that you ***call them*** whenever you think or feel that something wrong is happening.

WHEN TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT

You should call the police *any* time and *every* time you suspect that something is wrong, suspicious, dangerous, criminal, or possible trouble of any nature has occurred, is occurring, or is about to occur. Follow this rule: ***any time you think something is wrong, dangerous, or suspicious, immediately call the police (no exceptions)!***

The bottom line is this: if you call in what you believe is an emergency and it turns out that it is *not* an emergency, the very worst that can happen is that a police officer might be slightly inconvenienced for a few minutes. However, if it *is* an actual emergency and you treat it as a non-emergency, someone may die. ***If you must err, always err on the side of public safety!***

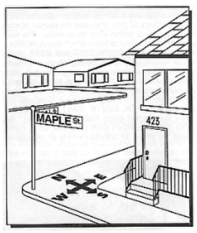
KNOW YOUR DIRECTIONS



Your ability to give the 911 dispatcher a specific location requires that you know the basic directions of your area and the name of streets or other identifying points within your community. The way to determine your direction is first to know which way is north, and from that you can determine south, east, and west. You can determine which is north by looking on your city's map (north will always be at the top of the map). Carefully study a map of your city or community and know your points of direction. Know all of your neighborhood's street names and how they run (north and south, east and west, etc.). Try to give all your directions to police or 911 based upon north, south, east, and west. For example, "I saw the suspect going east

on Main Street." Avoid telling the police that the suspect turned right or left, as this often makes the points of direction wrong or impossible to determine. If you are uncertain as to the compass direction, use landmarks; for example, "The suspect was walking toward the courthouse on Market Street from Sixth Street."

Know Your Location



It is important for you to give the police the best possible location of the trouble or suspicious activity. For example, it would be of little help for you to say that someone was breaking into a house on Maple Street. In order for the police to respond to this call on Maple Street, they would need specific information about where and how the house was being broken into. You must be able to give them a specific location or at least try to pinpoint it to a specific location.

Your call to the police should go something like this: "Someone is breaking into the house at 423 Maple Street, though the south back window," or "Somebody is breaking into the house on the southeast corner of Maple and Main Streets." By proving the police with this specific location, you will greatly help them quickly and accurately respond to your call.

How to Report a Crime

Here's how to report a crime to your local police.

- Immediately call the police. See the section on "Dialing 911."
- Tell the police as factually as possible what events are occurring or have occurred. That is, briefly state the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the situation.
- Give the best possible description of the suspect(s). See "Obtain Details About the Suspect."
- If a vehicle is involved, give the police the best possible description of the vehicle. See "Vehicle Descriptions."
- Provide the police with any other data or information they desire.

Example of a Police Emergency Situation

You observe someone breaking in through the back window of your neighbor's house. You know that your neighbors are not at home since they are on vacation. This is an emergency situation since immediate assistance is necessary to apprehend the criminal. Immediately call 911. Your call should sound something like this: "I want to report a possible burglary in progress at 423 Maple Street. I just saw someone breaking into my neighbor's house at that address, and they are on vacation. The suspect entered through the rear south window." At this point you should follow the dispatcher's instruction and provide as much help or additional data (description of the suspect, his vehicle, etc.) as you can. It is important in an emergency situation, like this burglary, that the police be notified immediately, as burglars usually move very quickly, and a quick police response is necessary.

Know Your Emergency Services' Non-Emergency Number

Memorize your local 911 Center's non-emergency phone number and have it saved in your phone so you can have it readily available when needed. In Wood County, all

emergency services (law enforcement, fire, and ambulance) request that all phone calls be routed through the Central Communications (911) Center at (304) 485-8501, whether you are reporting an emergency or not. Remember: for non-emergencies anywhere in Wood County call (304) 485-8501; for emergencies call 911.

EXAMPLE OF NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

It is 2:20 a.m. and you hear loud music in your neighborhood. It is obvious to you that somebody has the radio on loud, but nothing indicates that immediate police or fire department assistance is necessary. You, of course, want the loud music to stop since you are unable to sleep. You would simply call Central Communications using the regular, non-emergency phone number. You would not call 911 since this is not an emergency that requires immediate assistance from the police to protect life or property.

Another example of a non-emergency situation: in the morning you go out to your car and attempt to start it, and it won't start. You open the hood and discover that your car's battery has been stolen. It is obvious that the battery was stolen during the night, as nobody is around or near your car at this time. This is *not* an emergency situation as there is no need for the police to render immediate assistance since your battery has already been stolen. You should report the theft to the police using the non-emergency phone number, not 911.

RELATED SOPS AND FORMS

SOPs

- Calling 911
- How to Observe and Report
- Increasing Your Power of Observation
- How to Detect Suspicious Activities
- Obtain Details About the Suspect(s)
- How to Obtain a Vehicle Description

Forms

- Incident Report Form
- Suspect Identification Form

Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

CALLING 911

WHEN TO CALL 911

You should call 911 any time you observe a situation requiring an *immediate response* from law enforcement, the fire department, or an ambulance to save a life, prevent a serious injury, prevent serious property damage, stop/prevent a crime that is happening or about to happen, or respond to a crime that has just happened. Under a valid emergency situation, time is of the essence and an immediate response can make the difference between life and death. ***In any emergency, immediately call 911***. If you need to report circumstances to law enforcement that do not constitute an emergency, use the non-emergency number, (304)485-8501. However, ***when in doubt, call 911***.

DO THE FOLLOWING WHEN CALLING 911

We recommend that all Neighborhood Watchers identify themselves to the dispatcher as members of Neighborhood Watch when placing any call to 911. By doing so you will let the dispatcher know that you are a trained observer in a semi-official position; this will provide you with enhanced credibility in the mind of the dispatcher. Keeping in mind that the dispatcher will always ask for your location first, it is recommended that your call should start something like this:

- **Dispatcher:** "911 — *where* is your emergency?"
- **You:** First provide the nature of the call and the location, then identify yourself. "I want to report a possible burglary in progress at 1276 Maple Street. My name is John Smith and I'm a Neighborhood Watch Captain (or Member)."
- Provide the dispatcher with as much of the following information as you can:
  - Specify the nature of the emergency, i.e., police, fire, or medical.
  - The location of the emergency. Be as specific as possible and provide the address and nearest cross street when possible.
  - What emergency or crime has happened, is happening, or is about to happen, e.g., robbery in progress, house on fire, person unconscious, etc.
  - If weapons are involved, advise the type of weapon being used, e.g., knife, handgun, rifle, shotgun.
  - Number of persons involved (both perpetrators and victims) in the emergency or crime. Are minors involved?
  - When asked, provide the best possible description you can of the perpetrator(s).
- Provide the dispatcher with your call-back phone number if asked. This is so the dispatcher can call you back in the event the call gets interrupted before responders arrive.
- The dispatcher will probably ask you to stay on the line until the emergency responders arrive. Be ready to tell the dispatcher what is happening, or if any conditions change.

- If you are out of doors in the vicinity of the emergency situation, the dispatcher will likely ask for your description and the description of your vehicle (if any) so responders will be able to recognize you upon their arrival and distinguish you from the perpetrator(s).

Do exactly as the dispatcher and the first responders tell you during the course of the call and the emergency situation. Give them all the information or other assistance they desire under the circumstances. Remember, your assistance could mean the difference between, life, death, or serious injury.

COOPERATING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Preventing crime in your community is a cooperative effort between you and your local police or sheriff's department. As has been pointed out, you must do your part by acting as your police department's eyes and ears. When communicating or working with your police department, follow this checklist:

- Tell the dispatcher or law enforcement only what you *really* know or have *actually* observed. If you are only estimating or generalizing, be sure to say so.
- Do *not* exaggerate your experience or observations; keep them as factual as possible.
- Make yourself available for interviews, attend police line-ups if requested, and don't be afraid to identify the suspect, but *be sure of that identification.*
- If, after you have been interviewed by law enforcement, you remember or think of something about the crime or suspect that you did not tell them, *immediately write it down* and call law enforcement on the non-emergency line. Remember, the information you give law enforcement may be one of the few things they will have to work with.
- Testify in court if requested. Fully cooperate with your prosecuting attorney. Your testimony is vital in many cases for the conviction of criminals.

STAY INVOLVED

Stay actively involved in your Neighborhood Watch Program. Remember to apply what you have learned in your Neighborhood Watch training, from these procedures, and from our website. By doing this you will make your community a better and safer place to live!

RELATED SOPS AND FORMS

SOPs

- Calling Law Enforcement
- How to Observe and Report
- Increasing Your Power of Observation
- How to Detect Suspicious Activities
- Obtain Details About the Suspect(s)
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Forms

- Incident Report Form
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Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

EVERBRIDGE NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

The Everbridge Notification System is the "Reverse 911" system of Wood County 911 (the Wood County Central Communications Center), who has graciously given the Parkersburg and Wood County Neighborhood Watch Co-op access to their system, providing us with an effective method of notifying our members with important information in an efficient and timely manner.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

When it is appropriate for the Wood County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (WCHSEM) to provide residents of the county with information about any situation that may adversely affect their safety, that information is provided to Central Communications where a system administrator prepares the information for distribution to citizens who have enrolled in the Resident Alert Notifications System. Citizens of Wood County may enroll in the system as a business or as an individual to get alerted about emergencies and other important community news. This system enables WCHSEM to provide you with critical information quickly in a variety of situations, such as severe weather, unexpected road closures, missing persons, and evacuations of buildings or neighborhoods.

You will receive time-sensitive messages wherever you specify, such as your home, mobile, or business phones, email address, text messages, and more. You pick where; you pick how. To register, you create a username and password, then enter your address, phone number(s), and other information, and then select which types of situations for which you wish to be notified. You may choose from:

- Wood County Alerts
  - Boil Notices
  - Public Meeting
  - Road Closures
  - School Information
  - Special Events
  - Other Emergencies
- Weather Alerts
  - Wind
  - Flood
  - Winter Conditions
  - Non-Precipitation
  - Severe Weather

Central Communications has provided Neighborhood Watch with access to our own segment of the system to create our own database and to determine for ourselves what information we wish to provide to our members. The Resident Alert Notifications System and Neighborhood Watch Notification System are operated as separate systems. *Enrolling in one system does not enroll you in the other.* You enroll in the county program on their website at woodcountywv.com/county-offices/e911.html.

You are automatically enrolled in the Neighborhood Watch system when you join a Watch Group and your Watch Captain provides the IT Coordinator with your contact information. To be entered correctly into the system, you must provide your complete contact information.

How Members are Added to the System

When you apply to join a Neighborhood Watch Group, your Watch Captain submits that application to President, who forwards it to the IT (Information Technology) Coordinator, who enters your information into the Co-op Membership database *and* the Neighborhood Watch Notification System. So, when you join you are automatically enrolled in the system. *Please note that the system is available only to active members of the Neighborhood Watch Co-op*. If your contact information changes at any time, you may email the updated information to the IT Coordinator, give it to the IT Coordinator at any regular Co-op meeting, or send it to the meeting with your Watch Captain.

System Requirements

To be properly entered into the Everbridge system, the system needs your:

a. Full name (First, Middle Initial, Last)
b. Street Address
c. SMS/Text (cell) Number
d. Cell Phone Number
e. Home Phone Number
f. Email Address (if any)

Without your name, address, and at least one valid form of contact, you cannot be added to the system.

System Notifications

The Neighborhood Watch Notification System is administered by the IT Coordinator, who is responsible for maintaining the database and preparing notifications. Watch Captains may initiate notifications for their Watch Group by contacting the IT Coordinator with the information. When a notification is sent, it is sent in the following order (we do not send messages to your work phone):

1. SMS/Text (if provided)
2. Cell Phone Number (if provided)
3. Home Phone Number (if provided)
4. Email Address (if provided)

If you do not respond to the text message right away, the notification is then automatically sent to your cell phone number. If you do not answer your cell phone, the system leaves a voice mail and then calls your home phone number. If you do not answer your home phone, it leaves a voice mail and sends you an email of the notification. As soon as the system receives your first response, it stops sending. This is why some members are receiving multiple copies of the notifications.

Changing/Stopping Notifications

Do not contact the 911 center with unsubscribe or change requests.

To change your contact information, email your request to the IT Coordinator[1] with "NW CHANGE CONTACT INFO" as the subject and provide the new contact information. Indicate if the phone number is a landline or cell number and indicate if the cell number can

[1] Current contact information for Co-op officers is at www.pkb-wood-neighborhoodwatch.org/contact.html.

receive text messages. You may also call the IT Coordinator with the new information. Alternatively, simply provide the IT Coordinator with your updated contact information at the next meeting.

To stop receiving Neighborhood Watch notifications altogether you may reply STOP when responding to a text notification or press ZERO when answering a *live* phone notification (this will *not* work on a recorded message). To unsubscribe via email, send your request to the IT Coordinator with "NW UNSUBSCRIBE" as the subject.

NOTE WELL

Because we must be able to contact our members via the system, *participation in the Notification System is a condition of membership.* If you opt out of the Notification System, it will be assumed that you no longer wish to participate in the Neighborhood Watch program and *you will be removed from the membership database*.