



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 chartered 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.