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.

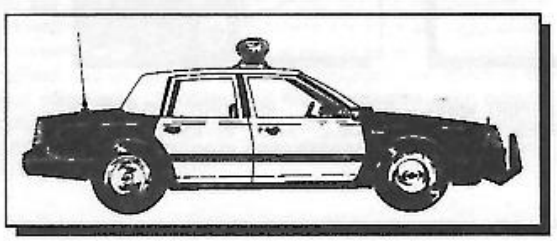
Citizens involved in Neighborhood Watch are trained in how to recognize suspicious or criminal activities and report these activities to their police department. These Neighborhood Watch Citizens keep well informed about their neighborhood and of any suspicious, criminal, or dangerous activities that 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.

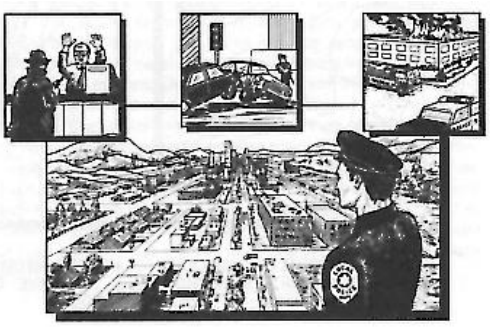


Police Officer Availability

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.