

Neighborhood Watch

Information Handbook



*A Complete Guide to Establishing A Neighborhood Watch
In Your Community*



Prince William County Police Department

Benefits of Neighborhood Watch

- Reduce the risk of burglaries by 40% to 70% (NATW, 2006).
- Creates a greater awareness of crime.
- Direct support from Police Department.
- Greater community pride.
- Brings neighbors closer together.
- Potential to increase property value.
- Crime prevention training.
- Increases reporting of crime and suspicious activities.
- Signs send a warning to criminals.
- Provides residents with access to crime patterns and trends.
- Home security inspections
- Gives residents a personal contact within the Police Department.
- Enhanced quality of life.
- Monthly crime reports.
- Free membership to the Prince William Crime Prevention Council.
- Free starter patrol gear.



COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

1 County Complex Court, Prince William, VA 22192-9201
(703) 792-6650 Metro 631-1703 FAX (703) 792-7056

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Office of the Chief

Charlie T. Deane
Chief of Police

Dear Prince William County Citizen:

The Neighborhood Watch Program is designed to reduce crime and enhance the quality of life for residents of Prince William County. Our County has one of the finest Neighborhood Watch programs in the Country and has repeatedly received national recognition for spirit, participation, and ingenuity. The Prince William County Police Department places a very high priority on the program. We have long recognized that when the public and the police approach community problems in a spirit of cooperation, there are no challenges that cannot be overcome.

As a Neighborhood Watch member, it will be incumbent upon you to actively participate in training classes, meetings, and patrols throughout your neighborhood. Starting a Watch requires a commitment as well as some of your time. In the end, though, you will take great pride in your accomplishments. I encourage you to contact the Crime Prevention Unit and begin the process of starting a Neighborhood Watch in your community.

I appreciate your interest in the Neighborhood Watch program and look forward to working with you in keeping Prince William County a safe place to live, work, and raise our children.

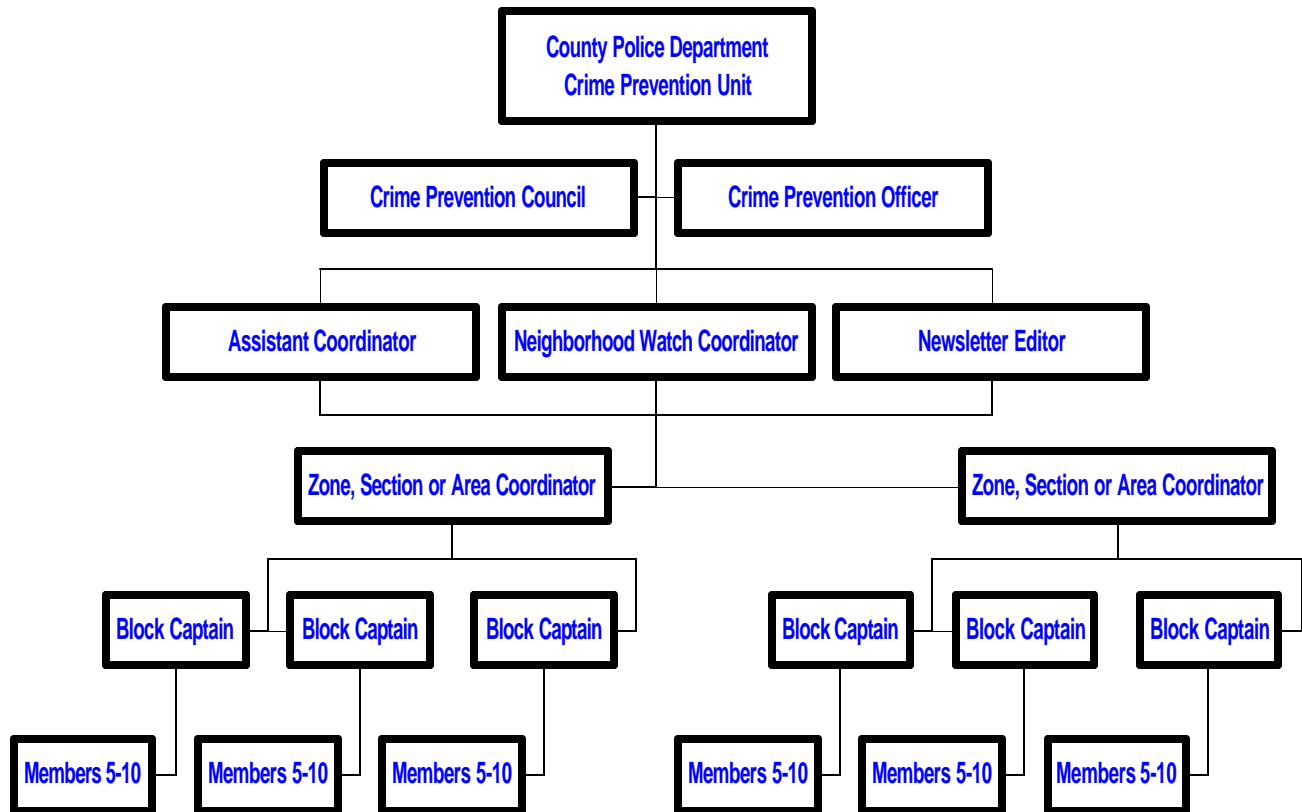
Charlie T. Deane
Chief of Police



Table of Contents

Benefits of Neighborhood Watch.....	2
Organization Chart.....	3
Golden Rules for Starting a Neighborhood Watch.....	4
Neighborhood Watch Code.....	5
Check List for Setting Up a Neighborhood Watch.....	6
Sample Letter to Start a Neighborhood Watch.....	7
Neighborhood Watch Survey Form.....	8
Answers to Frequently Asked Questions.....	9
Block Captain Letter.....	10
Block Captain Roster.....	11
Meeting Flyer.....	12
Patrol Schedule Options.....	13
Patrol Instructions.....	14
Minimum Requirements.....	15

Organization Chart for Neighborhood Watch Prince William County



COORDINATOR'S DUTIES:

- Recruit Members and Block Captains and set up meetings.
- Maintain awareness of crime in the area.
- Maintain roster and phone numbers of members.
- Hold Block Captain Meetings and prepare schedules.
- Publish Newsletter.
- Act as administrative liaison between police and community.
- Attend Crime Prevention Council Meetings.
- Disseminate Crime Prevention information and newsletters.

BLOCK CAPTAINS DUTIES:

- Responsible for 5-10 homes in immediate area.
- Disseminate Crime Alerts and newsletters.
- Recruit new members.
- Maintain current roster of members and phone numbers
- Assist in set up of patrol schedule if needed.
- Encourage reporting of suspicious activity and crime.
- Assist Coordinator as needed.

GOLDEN RULES FOR STARTING A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Much of your success will lie in your initial commitment to this endeavor and your willingness to lay a foundation that will ensure that your Watch will be sanctioned. Here are some of the key rules that our most successful Watch efforts have grown from:

1. **Make the initial contact in person.** Sometimes coordinators place the surveys on their neighbor's doors and wait for the calls to come pouring in. When the calls don't come, they interpret the low response as a lack of interest. Personal contact is a must when you are trying to pitch a new program in an area as busy as Prince William County. It is much easier to disregard a piece of paper, than a well-intentioned neighbor.
2. **Provide sufficient notification, and a personal reminder.** Hand out the flyer, put up neighborhood signs and make calls the night before the meeting.
3. **Organize the Neighborhood Watch.** During your initial contact with your neighbors, determine who shows the highest interest and use these people as Block Captains.
4. **Provide an adequate meeting facility.** This should be as close to the community as possible. While we have had successful meetings for small groups in large living rooms, basements, and garages, we have found that homes are generally too small for a meeting location. A nearby church, school or firehouse is desirable.
5. **Keep the Neighborhood Watch separate from the Community Homeowners Association (HOA).** This is recommended because HOA's deal with issues that can sometimes be political or controversial. If you link the two and the HOA becomes embroiled in an issue, the Watch may end up as a casualty. However, HOA's can provide support, by the enforcement of the covenants to improve the appearance of the community, or funding Watch patrol equipment.
6. **Once you start, don't stop.** Too much down time between these steps can be disastrous. Keep your momentum. This entire process should take no more than six weeks from first call to the community-training meeting.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH CODE

HOME SECURITY:

We will conduct security inspections of our homes and practice realistic security measures to include:

- Securing doors, windows, garages, personal property and automobiles.
- Lighting front and rear areas of our homes during the hours of darkness.
- Marking our personal property by engraving or other means, to deter theft and expedite the recovery of stolen items.
- Coordinating activities and extended absences with our immediate neighbors or block captains to ensure adequate security coverage.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS:

We will be watchful for any unusual or suspicious persons, activities or vehicles in our neighborhood.

CRIME REPORTING:

If we suspect or observe a crime in progress or see evidence of a crime having been committed, we will contact the police immediately at (703) 792-6500 or, in an emergency, 911.

WATCH PATROL:

We will take every opportunity during the course of our daily activities to go out of our way to be observant. When called upon, we will participate in scheduled Neighborhood Watch patrols and will abide by the patrol instructions issues by the Prince William County Police.

EDUCATION AND RECRUITING:

We will explain to our children, new neighbors, friends, and others, the purpose of the Neighborhood Watch Program and it's benefits. We will solicit their support and encourage them to contribute to the program within their capabilities as responsible citizens.

SAFETY:

We recognize the goals of Neighborhood Watch to be personal safety, protection of property and an enhanced quality of life for our neighborhood. We will not endanger ourselves or others to achieve these goals. We understand that our mission is to deter, observe and report.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

We acknowledge that this program cannot be successful without a commitment to one another as neighbors. We agree to be open minded when a neighbor comes to us with a problem and pledge to do our best to resolve neighborhood problems as a team.

"In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it." Marianne Williamson

CHECK LIST FOR SETTING UP A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

- Review this Handbook.**
- Contact your Crime Prevention Officer.**
- Conduct a door-to-door survey.**
Speak directly to your neighbors. Have them fill out the survey form while you wait. Remember that there must be an obvious interest throughout the neighborhood indicating sufficient support for the program. We have seen that most successful Watches will have about half of the neighborhood participating.
- Compile the surveys.**
Once the surveys are completed, contact your Crime Prevention Officer with the results. If the neighborhood will support the program, then select your Block Captains based on the survey responses. You need a Block Captain for every 5-10 homes and they should be staggered throughout the community.
- Block Captains Training.**
Your first meeting will be held with your Block Captains and your Crime Prevention Officer, usually at the home of the Coordinator. Make sure that you coordinate the date with your Crime Prevention Officer before you contact the Captains.
- Neighborhood Watch Training.**
The coordinator will be responsible for identifying and reserving a training site. Churches, schools, and Fire Departments are the best sites for these meetings. The Police Department can supply you with a flyer and all the copies needed unless you have other resources. Be sure to coordinate the date with your Crime Prevention Officer first.
- Distribute the Meeting Invitation.**
Flyers should be passed out 7 to 10 days prior to the training. Additionally, meeting signs should be posted the day before the training and Block Captains should call everyone on their list the night before to ensure participation. REMEMBER! The watch will not be sanctioned unless the majority of the members receive this training.
- Training Conducted.**
The Police Department will conduct the 60 minute Neighborhood Watch training.
- Follow-up with Police Department.**
Send in your Roster and Schedule to your Crime Prevention Officer.
- Activate your Watch.**
Send out the patrol schedule and rosters to the members. Remember to share all information received from the Police Department about crime in your area.



COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

1 County Complex Court, Prince William, VA 22192-9201
(703) 792-6650 Metro 631-1703 FAX (703) 792-7056

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Office of the Chief

SAMPLE NEIGHBORHOOD LETTER TO ACCOMPANY YOUR SURVEY

Charlie T. Deane
Chief of Police

(Date)

TO: Resident of (Street Name)
FROM: Your Crime Prevention Officer
RE: Crime in your neighborhood and Neighborhood Watch

We are conducting a survey in your area to determine if sufficient interest exists to start a Neighborhood Watch Program. Police statistics indicate that in the past one year period, there were ____ calls for police service on (Street Name) alone. This includes ____ burglaries, ____ larcenies, ____ vandalisms, ____ prowler, and ____ disturbance calls.

If you interested in helping to start a Neighborhood Watch on (Street Name), please complete the attached survey form and return it to (Watch coordinator's name, address and phone number). If you have any further questions, please contact the Crime Prevention Unit at (703) 792-7270.

The Neighborhood Watch Program can have a great effect on the safety of your family, home, and community. It receives tremendous support from the Police Department, but it is dependent upon citizen commitment. If you fail to complete the survey, we may not have sufficient support to proceed with the program. Please help us make your community a safer place to live.

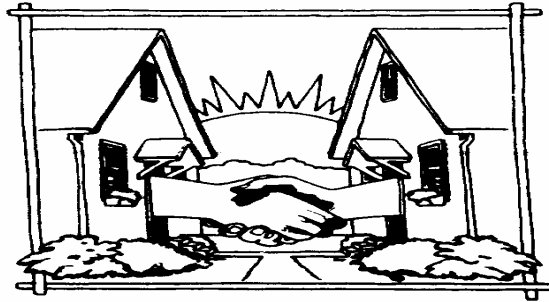
Crime Prevention Officer
Crime Prevention Unit
Phone: (703) 792-7270

**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER IF YOU
WOULD LIKE A LETTER LIKE THIS DRAFTED.**

A NATIONALLY ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY



Neighborhood Watch Survey



This survey is being conducted in your neighborhood to determine if sufficient interest exists to start a Neighborhood Watch Program. The program is free and is sponsored by the Prince William County Police Department. A minimum level of interest must be established before we can proceed with the program and your support is needed.

1. Would you be in favor of a Neighborhood Watch Program in our community?
 Yes No

2. Would you consider patrolling the neighborhood once every 2 or 3 months by car or by foot? (Patrol options are very flexible and require observation only – no intervention)
 Maybe Yes No

3. Would you consider serving as a block captain, if needed? (Block Captains serve as a point of contact for 5 – 10 homes around you.)
 Maybe Yes No

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

HOME PHONE _____ **WORK PHONE** _____

E-MAIL _____

Please return to you Coordinator _____



Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How much time is this going to take?*

Neighborhood Watch requires a minimal amount of time for neighborhood participants. There is just one training meeting to attend. Once the program is going, watch members will be scheduled for patrol duty once every few months.

2. *How long is the training meeting?*

The training program is no more than 1½ hours long, starting at 7:30 p.m. and generally ending by 9:00 p.m. The program covers Neighborhood Watch guidelines, reporting suspicious activity, watch patrol procedures, and Homeland Security.

3. *Do I have to patrol?*

Patrol is a requirement for Neighborhood Watch, but there are many ways to meet this objective. Mass patrols with Crime Prevention Officers can be conducted in high-risk areas. Family week patrols are an option or home patrol where streets are monitored from your windows. Members who cannot participate in patrols could support other objectives such as attending the training program, utilizing lighting or typing the newsletter.

4. *What good do the patrols do, and how often would I have to patrol?*

The patrols serve three primary purposes: 1) They provide a visible deterrent to criminals. 2) They keep people involved in the program. 3) They help the police by using their familiarity with the area to identify suspicious activity or circumstances. The number of participants and the incidents of criminal activity determine the frequency of watch patrols. Generally, each Watch member pulls one patrol duty every 2 or 3 months.

5. *What does a Block Captain do?*

Block Captains are the point of contact for 5-10 homes surrounding them. The Block Captains in a Watch assist with surveys, hand out crime prevention materials, and welcome new neighbors into the program.

6. *I'm just renting, why should I participate?*

We still need your support. Criminals don't care if you own or rent and neither does the Watch.

7. *Do Neighborhood Watch Programs really work?*

Police studies consistently show a significant crime reduction in Watch areas.

8. *Do we have a crime problem?*

The police Department will provide you with a detailed crime report at the training meeting. However, you don't need to wait for a crime problem to start the Watch.



COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

1 County Complex Court, Prince William, VA 22192-9201
(703) 792-6650 Metro 631-1703 FAX (703) 792-7056

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Office of the Chief

SAMPLE BLOCK CAPTAIN LETTER

Charlie T. Deane
Chief of Police

(Date)

Dear Block Captain:

Thank you for volunteering to serve as Block Captain for your Neighborhood Watch. Your job, as Block Captain, will be to serve as the **point of contact** between the Watch Coordinator and several neighbors around you (called your block).

As a Block Captain, here is what we need you to do:

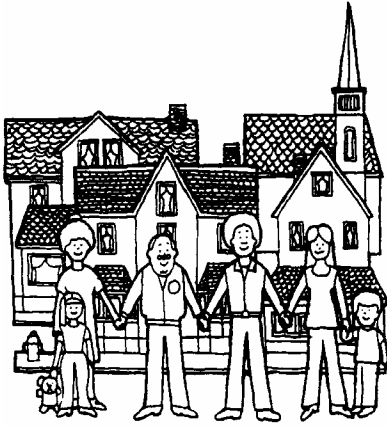
1. **Attend** the Block Captain training.
2. **Collect the remaining Watch surveys** from your block. Surveys must be conducted in person, face-to-face, with your neighbors. There are only three questions, so you could just wait while they fill it out, or you could even fill it out for them while asking the questions.
3. **Compile a contact list** of your block member's names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail.
4. **Hand out flyers** for the community meeting.
5. **Next, and most important**, one or two days prior to the training program, you must **call all of your neighbors** on your block to remind them about the meeting and establish their commitment to attend. Years of experience has proven that if you fail to make these calls, there will not be a sufficient turnout.
6. **Attend** the training program.

Thanks you again for your service. The roll of the Block Captain is a critical link in the Neighborhood Watch Program. When the time comes that you are ready to step down as the Captain for your area, please recruit one of your neighbors to take your place rather than just vacating the position.

Crime Prevention Unit
Prince William County Police

A NATIONALLY ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY





NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH TRAINING MEETING

Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

The Police Department will instruct us in:

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GUIDELINES

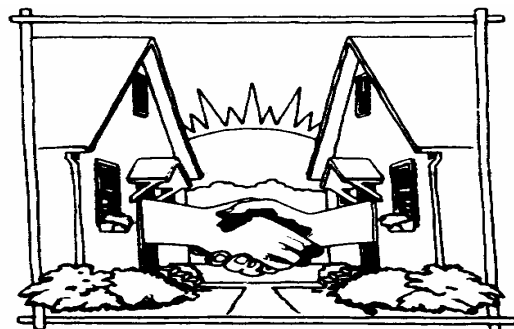
REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

WATCH PATROL PROCEDURES

HOMELAND SECURITY

If you have any questions, please contact you Watch Coordinator at _____ or your Police Coordinator at the Crime Prevention Unit at (703) 792-7270.

Neighborhood Watch
IT WORKS!



Patrol Schedule Options

Flexibility is the key to this component of Neighborhood Watch. Each Watch sets up its own patrol schedule, and there are many different variations. The intent is to provide a visible deterrent without burning out the participants. The size of the Watch and the option you choose will determine how much coverage you can provide.

Family Week Watch: This is perhaps the easiest way to schedule patrols because only one family is assigned per week. The schedule can be made for several months, or even a year at a time. The family patrols as often as they can during their week, and then pass the patrol bag to the next family. You have to periodically track the bag to ensure that it is getting passed on. This option places the least amount of demand on busy schedules.

Daily: This method is the most time consuming but is also the most aggressive. Each day has a different Watch patrol team assigned to it. This works best for watches that have over 60 patrol teams and have a high incidence of crime, requiring constant monitoring.

Target Days: This works like the daily method, only for smaller watches. First, determine how many days of the week your Watch can cover, based on the number of patrol teams you have, then you schedule patrols on two or three days a week.

The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator and Block Captains will decide the best approach for your neighborhood. Your Crime Prevention Officer can show you examples of how other neighborhoods have set up their patrols. Here are a few more suggestions:

- Patrol schedules should be prepared quarterly or semi-annually rather than weekly or monthly. If it becomes too time consuming, it won't get done.
- Coordinators and/or Block Captains should phone participants periodically throughout the schedule to ensure that the patrol bag has been passed on. If you do not monitor the movement of the bag, it could end up in someone's closet or garage and the patrol will be dormant.
- Do not require that a replacement person be recruited when someone cannot make their patrol. This too, is very time consuming.

PATROL INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

1. **Patrol with a partner.** This is not only a safety measure but is also provides for an additional witness and assistance in case of trouble. You are encouraged to patrol in pairs.
2. **Transportation.** Walk, drive or both.
3. **Schedule.** Patrol at least once every two hours. Random patrolling is best. If you or your family members can patrol during the daylight hours or after midnight, please do so. Any hour of the day is suitable for patrolling.
4. **Route.** Your designated Neighborhood Watch area.
5. **Recommended Equipment.** Carry at least one flashlight per patrol during the hours of darkness. If driving, you can opt to affix the magnetic identification signs to your vehicle. (Please handle these signs carefully – they are expensive and somewhat fragile.) If walking, you can opt to wear the reflective Neighborhood Watch vest or hat to identify yourselves. Carry a patrol logbook or a pad and pencil.
6. **Patrol unarmed!!** Sidearms, shotguns, rifles, knives, ax handles, mace/pepper spray and any other type of weapon are prohibited on patrol. Remember, we are the eyes and ears of the community and the police, not a vigilante group.
7. **Reporting.** If you suspect criminal activity, observe a crime in progress, or see evidence of a crime having been committed, one patrol member should contact the police, (703) 792-6500. Immediately identify yourself as a member of Neighborhood Watch and provide the appropriate information. The other patrol member(s) should remain at or near the scene and continue to observe, if safe to do so.
8. **Do not attempt to detain individuals against their will.** Not only might this be dangerous, but you may be violating their civil or legal rights.
9. **Try to identify victims/witnesses and urge them to file a formal complaint.** Many crimes are either never reported, remain unsolved, or offenders are not punished because people refuse to get involved.
10. **Maintain “high visibility” during your patrol.** It is just as important for potential lawbreakers to see us as it is for us to see them. Our objective is to deter criminals, not apprehend them.
11. **Always put safety first.** Unnecessary heroics are out of place for patrol.
12. **If anything looks suspicious, report it!** Immediately report to the police, *not the Block Captain or Coordinator.*
13. **Record information.** If you see anything on patrol that does not warrant a call to the police but does draw your attention, record the information in your notepad or your patrol logbook.

Minimum Requirements

Each Watch must meet and maintain the following four basic standards in order to remain sanctioned by the Police Department. If your watch ever fails to meet any of these requirements, contact your Crime Prevention Officer for help. Watches that are unable to meet the requirements will be terminated.

NEWSLETTER

All Watches shall be required to put out a periodic newsletter to all members. If the newsletter is not a monthly edition, some action should be taken to get the monthly statistics out to Block Captains on a monthly basis. Watch information and statistics may also be incorporated into an existing neighborhood newsletter.

PATROL

All Watches will be required to have an active patrol and submit a periodic written copy of the patrol roster to their Crime Prevention Officer for their Watch file.

TRAINING

All Watches will be required to have the majority of their members trained in the basics of the Neighborhood Watch Program. Additional training can be scheduled with the Crime Prevention Unit which includes Home Security, Personal Safety, Theft Prevention, Homeland Security, and many more.

ROSTER

All Watches will be required to maintain an up-to-date roster of members complete with phone numbers. Crime Prevention officers are required to maintain a list of Watch members, so periodic updates should be supplied to them.

The Neighborhood Watch Program can have a positive effect on the safety of your family, home, and community. It receives tremendous support from the Police Department, but it is dependent upon citizen commitment. We need your help! Once your Neighborhood Watch is established, please continue to keep it active and involved. The Police Department will assist you in any way possible to ensure that your Watch is successful.