

Neighborhood Watch Needs **YOU**



BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance
Office of Justice Programs • U.S. Department of Justice





**NATIONAL
CRIME
PREVENTION
COUNCIL**

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose primary mission is to enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical

assistance, and a national focus for crime prevention: it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, more than 300 national, federal, state, and local organizations committed to preventing crime. It hosts a number of websites that offer prevention tips to individuals, describe prevention practices for community building, and help anchor prevention policy into laws and budgets. It operates demonstration programs in schools, neighborhoods, and entire jurisdictions and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention and youth service. NCPC manages the McGruff® "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®" public service advertising campaign. NCPC is funded through a variety of government agencies, corporate and private foundations, and donations from private individuals.



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Neighborhood Watch

is coming to your community, and we need you to get involved! What's in it for you? Safer streets and homes, community spirit, camaraderie with your neighbors, stronger relationships with law enforcement, and so much more. And it's easy to participate in Neighborhood Watch! Neighborhood Watch embraces and strengthens many things we're already doing, such as watching out for each other's homes or working together to solve problems. But Neighborhood Watch brings along the power of organization and the ability to focus energy and resources.

Often Neighborhood Watch groups get started because there have been incidents in the community that have caused concern—acts of vandalism, burglaries, or auto thefts. These are the types of crime that Neighborhood Watch is the most successful in reducing. An active Watch group can also help reduce drug dealing and open-air drug markets, discourage gangs, improve the security of young people, and help older neighbors stay safe from crime.






What Is Neighborhood Watch?

Since 1972, when the National Sheriffs' Association implemented the program, Neighborhood Watch has meant neighbors looking out for each other, working on neighborhood problems, and making themselves safer. Members learn how to work with law enforcement and report suspicious activity to the police or sheriff's office.

Most Neighborhood Watch Programs get started in the same way:

- One or more neighbors become concerned about preserving or improving neighborhood safety.
- The motivated individual or group of people decides to start a Watch group.
- They get in touch with the local law enforcement agency about steps to take.
- They notify the neighborhood and get others involved.
- Neighbors are trained in home security, crime reporting, property marking, and other Neighborhood Watch basics.
- The group organizes and decides what additional services to offer, such as citizen patrols to walk or drive through the area and report suspicious activities to law enforcement.
- They communicate with neighbors through phone trees, fliers, newsletters, or email lists.
- They organize such events as block parties, cleanups, or graffiti removal.

 **Mobile, AL:** The Mitternacht Park Community Action Group has logged more than 3,000 hours of neighborhood patrol time since the Watch group began in March 2003. Tips from Watch members helped the Mobile Police Department shut down a methamphetamine lab, resulting in ten arrests. Calls for police service dropped over a two-year period from an average of 15 to 20 calls per month to only about two per month. Watch members also serve on the Community Emergency Response Team where they are trained to respond to natural disasters, terrorism incidents, and other emergencies.

What types of activities might you get involved in through your Neighborhood Watch group?

Citizen Corps programs that ask individuals to be prepared; get training in first aid and emergency skills; and volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief, and community safety such as

- **Community Emergency Response Teams**, which educate people about disaster preparedness and train them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations
- **Volunteers in Police Service**, which uses citizen volunteers to provide support services to local law enforcement

National Night Out, which is the first Tuesday in August, is sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch. Thousands of neighborhoods turn on outside lights and gather for neighborhood events such as block parties, cookouts, parades, and safety fairs.

Groups also organize **problem-solving activities** such as adopting a park or playground and painting over graffiti – or **social events** such as sponsoring a block party, potluck dinner, holiday parade, volleyball or softball game, or picnic.

Beyond day-to-day crime prevention, Neighborhood Watch groups can help the neighborhood strengthen hometown and homeland security activities in many ways:

- Developing a community evacuation plan; creating a neighborhood directory with phone numbers and email addresses for everyone in the neighborhood
- Helping neighbors develop emergency preparedness plans
- Discussing local warning systems and how to find information on evacuation routes and temporary shelters in emergency situations
- Discussing potential terrorist targets in or near your community—such as power plants, airports, and bridges—and the consequences of an attack.



Why Get Involved?

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You and your family will be safer. Neighborhood Watch will provide guidance on leading your family through a fire drill, preparing a disaster preparedness plan, and assembling a disaster supplies kit. When you work with your neighbors in Watch activities, you'll learn to look out for homebound seniors or latchkey children and, in return, you'll learn who's looking out for you.

You'll help reduce crime. An empty house in a neighborhood where none of the neighbors know the owner is a prime target for burglary. Throughout the country, dramatic decreases in burglary and related offenses are reported by law enforcement professionals in communities with active Watch programs.

You'll have a way to get help addressing neighborhood problems that concern you. Neighborhood Watch serves as a springboard for efforts that address concerns such as recreation for youth, child care, and traffic safety.

You can learn new skills and get experience using them. You'll learn crime prevention skills, including the ability to be the eyes and ears for law enforcement.

Your whole family can get involved. There's a role for everyone in Neighborhood Watch. Young children can pick up litter and take part in safety programs designed just for them. Youth can teach younger children how to stay safe. Retirees can operate telephone trees, write newsletters, and keep an eye out for daytime problems.

You Can Do It

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Feel like you don't have the time? You don't have to take on a leadership role. Offer to make a few phone calls. Write a story for the newsletter. Show up at community events even if you can't stay the whole time. Touch base with your neighbors and show that you support the effort. As you go about your daily routines, observe your surroundings. It only takes a moment to notice something suspicious and record and report what you saw. Every effort helps.

Feel like you don't have the skills? Your Neighborhood Watch can train you or help you get training. Neighborhood Watch is also a good way to practice your skills and learn new ones.

Feel like you're still a newcomer to the neighborhood? Neighborhood Watch is a wonderful way to get to know your neighbors and find people who share your interests. Knowing your neighbors also makes it easier to recognize strangers who may not have legitimate business on your street.



Harris County, TX: Since its founding in 2002, the Harris County Citizen Corps had compiled an extensive database of volunteers from the county's 33 jurisdictions. When an email went out asking for volunteers to help the evacuees from Hurricane Katrina, 1,000 people volunteered in the first hour. By the end of the effort, some 60,000 volunteers had participated, many from Neighborhood Watch groups. These volunteers were already organized and trained, and they helped out wherever they were needed—carrying water and other supplies or doing triage for incoming ill or disabled people. In this way, Neighborhood Watch provided services that went far beyond the boundaries of the neighborhood.

Saucier, MS: The Palmer Creek Estates Neighborhood Watch helped the community deal with and recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. In late August 2005, before the hurricane hit, Watch members made a careful count of who was staying in the development and who was evacuating. Among those who were staying, they noted who had medical problems and what type of assistance they would need. After the storm, Watch members completed a search and rescue, compiled a head count (kept up-to-date daily), and assessed the needs of the development. One member's home was the community command and control center and became the distribution center for food, water, clothing, baby necessities, and first aid. The community arranged to have medics flown in by helicopter to treat the homebound.

You're Part of the Answer

People like you are what make a Neighborhood Watch program successful. Your neighbor needs your help and you need your neighbor's help. The small steps you take now will pay big dividends down the road. Building a spirit of community helps keep all of you safer and more secure. That's what Neighborhood Watch is all about!



Resources

National Crime Prevention Council

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Tel: 202-466-6272
Fax: 202-296-1356
www.ncpc.org

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USAonWatch National Sheriffs' Association

1450 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3490
www.sheriffs.org

Tel: 703-836-7827
Fax: 703-683-6541
www.USAonwatch.org

The National Sheriffs' Association is dedicated to raising the level of professionalism among those in the criminal justice field. The Neighborhood Watch website, USAonWatch.org, offers a resource center, a newsletter, the Neighborhood Watch Toolkit, and more. Be sure to register your Watch group on the website.

→ **Tempe, AZ** The Tempe Police Department (TPD) shows how Neighborhood Watch and Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) can work together. TPD uses volunteers who have formally applied to the VIPS program, been screened, and passed a background check and polygraph test. These volunteers are treated like paid staff and are an integral part of the department's operations. One important function of the volunteers is to help the TPD support the 310 active Neighborhood Watch groups in the Tempe area. Four of the VIPS serve as Neighborhood Watch quadrant liaisons to each of the TPD's four service areas.



National Association of Town Watch

PO Box 303

One Wynnewood Road, Suite 102

Wynnewood, PA 19096

Tel: 800-NITE-OUT

Fax: 610-649-5456

www.nationaltownwatch.org

The National Association of Town Watch (NATW) is dedicated to the development and promotion of organized, law enforcement-affiliated crime prevention programs. NATW also sponsors the annual National Night Out on the first Tuesday in August.

Volunteers in Police Service International Association of Chiefs of Police

515 North Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Tel: 800-THEIACP

www.policevolunteers.org

The International Association of Chiefs of Police is managing and implementing the Volunteers in Police Service Program in partnership with and on behalf of the White House Office of the USA Freedom Corps and the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance. The program's ultimate goal is to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

www.citizencorps.gov/cert/about.shtm

CERT is a realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens will be initially on their own and their actions can make a difference. The website offers information on starting a CERT, delivering training, and maintaining involvement.



→ **San Gabriel, CA** Ten years ago, the San Gabriel Police Department began working to revitalize the city's dormant Neighborhood Watch program, which at the time consisted of two inactive Watch groups. A new crime prevention officer started a door-to-door campaign and sent out targeted recruitment mailings to start-up groups. Today, the city boasts 78 active Watch groups with more than 2,500 members. Activities of the police department have included presentations to Neighborhood Watch groups on homeland security and crime prevention topics. Crime prevention bulletins and Neighborhood Watch newsletters are sent to the community regularly.

→ **Niagara Falls, NY** The Niagara Falls Block Club Council is an organization of 33 individual block clubs operating within the City of Niagara Falls. In addition to participating in traditional Neighborhood Watch-related programs, such as National Night Out, public education, and safety fairs, the Council has broadened its scope to include homeland security. At the forefront of the Council's efforts has been lobbying on behalf of the public safety community. In fact, the Council's support during a budget session saved 11 firefighter and 13 police officer positions from being cut.



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