



# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH MANUAL

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National Neighborhood Watch  
Program

Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office

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Milton, Florida 32583

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[www.SantaRosaSheriff.org](http://www.SantaRosaSheriff.org)

# Neighborhood Watch Manual

## **PUBLISHED BY THE SANTA ROSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

This manual has been created for citizen organizers to establish watch programs. This material covers a number of topics and provides suggestions for developing watch groups. However, please incorporate topics and issues that are important to your neighborhood watch group.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Contact the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's office with any questions or concerns regarding your neighborhood.

Emergency: 911

Non-emergency: 850-983-1190

Main Line: 850-983-1100

Crime Prevention Coordinator: 850-983-1236

District 1 (Gulf Breeze): (850) 981-2270

District 2 (Navarre): (850) 981-2250

District 3 (Pace): (850) 981-2230

District 4 (Milton): (850) 983-1244

District 5 (Jay): (850) 675-4335

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# National Neighborhood Watch

## The National Face of Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch is undoubtedly one of the oldest and most well-known crime prevention programs in history. While the modern day concept of program rose to prominence in the late 1960s in response to an increasing burglary rate, the roots of Neighborhood Watch can actually be traced all the way back to the days of Colonial settlements, when night watchmen patrolled the streets. The modern version of the Neighborhood Watch-USA on Watch Program was developed as a result of the multiple requests from sheriffs and police chiefs around the country who were looking for a crime prevention program that would incorporate citizen involvement and address the increasing number of burglaries taking place, especially in rural and suburban areas. In 1972, the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) took the concept a step further by seeking funding to make the program a national initiative. Thanks to a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, the National Neighborhood Watch Program was started.

For the first two years, the program was devoted primarily to disseminating information on the nature and volume of burglary and securing residential property and making it less vulnerable to break-ins. From there, it evolved into a program that promoted the establishment of ongoing local neighborhood watch groups that encouraged citizens to partner with their law enforcement agencies in an effort to reduce various types of "neighborhood crime."

Since its beginnings, Neighborhood Watch has grown from an "extra eyes and ears" approach to crime prevention to a much more proactive, community-oriented endeavor providing a unique infrastructure that brings together local officials, law enforcement, and citizens for the protection of their communities. Today's Watch Group programs incorporate activities that not only address crime prevention issues, but also restore pride and unity to a neighborhood. It is not uncommon to see members of Neighborhood Watch groups participating in community cleanups and other activities that strive to improve the quality of life for community residents.

In addition, the adoption of community policing by local law enforcement agencies has contributed to a resurgence in Watch groups over the years. Neighborhood Watch fits nicely into the framework of law enforcement/community partnerships, and Neighborhood Watch meetings provide a useful forum for airing neighborhood problems and practicing problem-solving techniques.

Furthermore, Neighborhood Watch has become especially practical in our current society, in which two-income families are the norm and many neighborhoods are deserted during the day. While criminals have attempted to use this statistic to their advantage, law enforcement has uncovered an important reality: the communities in which citizens have observed and reported suspicious activity have enjoyed lower crime rates.

As communities throughout the country have adopted the program and reported success, the popularity of the Neighborhood Watch Program has grown, and it continues to still.

***To learn more, visit [www.NNW.org](http://www.NNW.org) and browse the site. Check out the Resource Center, visit the Neighborhood Watch partners, or register your Watch group.***

## **What is Neighborhood Watch?**

A Neighborhood Watch program is a group of people living in the same area who want to make their neighborhood safer by working together and in conjunction with their local law enforcement, the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, to reduce crime and improve their quality of life. Neighborhood Watch (NW) groups have regular meetings to plan how they will accomplish their specific goals and leaders with assigned responsibilities. Neighborhood Watch is homeland security at the highest local level. It is an opportunity to volunteer and work towards increasing the safety and security of our homes and our homeland. Neighborhood Watch empowers citizens and communities to become active in emergency preparedness, as well as the fight against crime and community disasters. Activities conducted by Neighborhood Watch groups across the country are as diverse and varied as their volunteers and the neighborhoods they represent. While disorder problems are the primary focus of Neighborhood Watch members, volunteers mobilize and conduct neighborhood clean-ups or work with faith-based organizations to assist with the homeless and mentally ill who wander the streets. As law enforcement officers learn the needs of their various Neighborhood Watch groups and the dynamics of their volunteers, they can tailor activities and responses to meet the ever-changing needs of their citizens.

## **Benefits of Neighborhood Watch**

There are obvious benefits Neighborhood Watch volunteers and their communities have experienced throughout the years such as:

- crime reduction
- a better quality of life
- a greater sense of security, responsibility, and personal control
- build community pride and unity
- preparing for helping ourselves and others in our community
- provide Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office with volunteer support year round
- citizens become the extra "eyes and ears" for local law enforcement

# Starting a Neighborhood Watch

A Neighborhood Watch group is easy to start. Have a meeting with your neighbors and don't forget to invite your crime prevention coordinator. The NW programs are built upon successful relationships between the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office and the community. Remember this is your Neighborhood Watch group and we are here to support and assist you. It is your responsibility to maintain interest and keep the group running smoothly.

- Begin to talk to your neighbors to engage interest. If they don't understand what NW is, explain to them the benefits of a Neighborhood Watch.
- Contact the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Coordinator at (850)-983-1236 or [crimeprevention@srsos.net](mailto:crimeprevention@srsos.net). They may have ideas or suggestions for starting a successful group.
- Don't be discouraged by low attendance or lack of interest. Not everyone will be interested in joining your Watch group right away or understand the need for the group. Continue to invite everyone and update neighbors who aren't involved. As the group grows, more will want to join!

## Who is Involved in Neighborhood Watch?

Any national initiative or program requires contributions at multiple levels, from the federal government to sheriffs to individual citizens. The National Sheriffs' Association is working with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, and the U.S. Department of Justice to form new Neighborhood Watch groups and revitalize existing groups. In order to reach the citizens, local law enforcement agencies have been given a charge to involve the people in their community. Anyone and everyone can be involved in a Neighborhood Watch group.

## Five Steps to Building a Successful Neighborhood Watch

Building a strong Neighborhood Watch program is not an overnight process: it takes patience, planning and dedication. However, a successful program will keep a community strong and protected and when a crime or emergency happens, they will be more ready.

**Keep these Five Steps in mind when starting your group:**

### Step 1

Talk with your fellow neighbors about their concerns regarding crime in the area and determine the level of interest others have in starting a Watch Group. While it may be hard to have every household involved, incorporating as many of your neighbors as possible will increase the likelihood for success in reducing crime.

### Step 2

Contact the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office at (850)-983-1236 to invite them to meet with your group at a time and place convenient to your Watch Group members. It is essential for your group to work in collaboration with law enforcement. Neighborhood Watch is a cooperative effort. Law enforcement needs to let the citizens know what is expected of them and Neighborhood Watch Group

members and the citizens need to let law enforcement know what their concerns are within the community.

### **Step 3**

Working with your Crime Prevention Coordinator, your Watch Group should identify patterns of crime in the area and develop strategies to address these problems. Your group will need to appoint a block captain to coordinate these efforts as well as design a means of communication for reporting crime and suspicious activities.

### **Step 4**

The Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office will work with you to train your Watch Group members in basic crime prevention techniques.

### **Step 5**

Take active steps in your community. Have a kickoff event to announce your formation and to encourage others to get involved. Start a Neighborhood Watch newsletter, schedule times for Watch members to conduct or attend citizen patrols, training, emergency drills, and crime prevention exercises.

*It is important to keep your group active and enthusiastic. Maintaining communication between group members and the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office is important. Be sure to schedule regular meetings so that your group remains focused.*

## **Organizing Your Neighborhood Watch**

A traditional NW group will include a law enforcement officer or crime prevention liaison to the group, an area coordinator who lives in the community, block captains spread throughout the community, and watch members. One of the final steps in forming and organizing a Neighborhood Watch is the designation of leadership. These individuals will be responsible for the planning and coordinating activities. Watch leaders may be formal leaders elected by their peers or informal leaders who are simply the first to volunteer! As a Watch becomes more advanced, the members may form an advisory or executive board to make decisions for a larger area. It doesn't matter how your Watch group is set-up, as long as your community members are excited and effectively addressing the identified problems.

### **The Crime Prevention Coordinator**

Traditionally, designated sworn officers or their non-sworn public service counterparts are assigned as liaisons or coordinators for Neighborhood Watch. Often these individuals are selected because of their previous crime prevention experience or training. Some Watch officers and coordinators are chosen because of their desire to reach out and work with the community, while others are selected because of their communication skills or abilities to plan, organize and mobilize others.

In Santa Rosa County, the Crime Prevention Coordinator is a civilian that works directly with law enforcement to assist the community with crime preventative techniques and information.

## **The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator**

The Coordinator's job is crucial to the success of your program. This may be just the right job for a retiree or other individual who has extra time at home. This person's responsibilities may include:

- Expanding the program and maintaining a current list of participants and neighborhood residents, including names, addresses, home and work telephone numbers, email addresses, and vehicle descriptions.
- Acting as liaison between Watch members, officers, civic groups, and block captains.
- Arranging neighborhood crime prevention training programs.
- Obtaining and distributing crime prevention materials, such as stickers and signs.
- Involving others to develop specific crime prevention projects.
- Encouraging participation in "Operation Identification," a nationwide program in which personal property is marked legibly with a unique identifying number to permit positive identification if valuables are lost or stolen.

## **The Block Captain (optional, depending on neighborhood size)**

Block captains are recommended for every 10-15 houses, and they should be directly involved with their immediate neighbors. The block captain's responsibilities may include:

- Acting as liaison between block residents and the coordinator.
- Establishing a "telephone chain" by compiling and distributing a current list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of block participants.
- Visiting and inviting new residents to join; notifying them of meetings and training sessions.
- Establishing an "Operation Identification" program.
- Contacting each neighbor as often as possible to discuss possible crime problems, needs for assistance, and suggestions for program improvement.

## **Neighborhood Watch Members**

In some neighborhoods, the need for a proactive Neighborhood Watch program will be evident because of the well documented crimes or the acknowledged disorder that occurs in the community. In these neighborhoods, residents are usually ready and willing to mobilize and participate in the NW program. They often need little external motivation. The focus in these areas is usually more on leadership and organization. The responsibility for the recruitment of volunteers usually falls to the Block Captains or Area Coordinators, but in some instances the officer may have to instruct these leaders on how to recruit new members. Once a core group of Neighborhood Watch volunteers has been identified, specific members may volunteer to take on leadership positions. In some instances, certain individuals may be reluctant to take on specialized roles within the group. The law enforcement officer may wish to interview and select certain key individuals to lead specific efforts.



# Communicating with Your Neighborhood Watch

## Phone Trees

Phone trees are a great way to share information and build a sense of community in the neighborhood. Phone trees can expedite emergency information. Neighborhoods can be divided into small, workable areas using streets or natural boundaries. Each group prepares a chart (which is continuously updated) that includes the names and phone numbers of all members. Each individual listed on the tree knows whom he is to contact should emergency or other important information need to be disseminated in a hurry.

## Email

Email is one of the best ways to get in touch with your neighbors. Your group can organize an email list much like that of a phone tree. When an issue in the neighborhood comes up you can contact the resident in a fast and efficient way with email. However, keep in mind that some people still do not have internet access at home.

## Social Media

Social media is a great way to share information with your neighbors. You can create a neighborhood watch Facebook group and set it to "private" where only those people who are part of your watch team are permitted access. Restricting access is a good idea because you probably don't want the bad guys knowing what security measures you are taking. The Crime Prevention Coordinator should be added to the group to quickly answer any questions outside of meetings. When setting up a group, please email the coordinator a link to request an invitation to join.

*Your group will have to decide who will maintain and update the email lists, social media group and what information should be included. Recommendations include: meeting reminders, information on crime in the neighborhood, business related directly to the group, and information law enforcement has asked the group to share. Information that should not be shared includes: chain emails, personal information about a neighbor, news articles unrelated to the group.*

## Neighborhood Maps

A neighborhood map is a powerful tool on a simple sheet of paper. Along with a phone tree, a map can give residents information on where everyone in the neighborhood lives and also put landmarks and distance from house to house into perspective. The map will familiarize NW members with families living in the neighborhood as well as address any potential dangers during an emergency.

*Divide neighborhoods of 50 or more homes into "areas" because if a Watch group is too big, it can fall apart with only a few people to manage it. Each area could have a color or a name and its own area captain.*

# Planning and Conducting Meetings

Traditionally, Neighborhood Watch was always about having meetings to discuss crime in the neighborhood, but as NW has changed, so have meetings. The key to planning a successful Watch meeting is organization. NW leaders should be aware that participants are volunteering time out of busy schedules and should work to ensure efficient and informative meetings. Meeting leaders should have the facilities prepared prior to the meeting, start and finish on time, and thank participants for attending. Some meetings require a face-to-face gathering. By meeting in person, you are able to establish, build, and maintain personal relationships with the people with whom you are working. By holding a meeting, you are able to educate and share valuable information with attendees. You will be able to “read” your audience in order to focus on things that are important to the group as a whole. Meetings allow those in attendance to discuss ideas and make group decisions. By meeting in person and talking together, new ideas can be generated and the group will focus on issues and information important to the group as a whole.

## Inviting Neighbors

You want to get as many neighbors together as you can. How you invite them is important.

- Make your invitation simple and clear. Mention a recent crime as incentive.
- Deliver the invitation in person if possible. Face-to-face is more effective than leaving a piece of paper on a doorstep.
- Ask if they could spare “only one hour” to talk with other neighbors about how to fight crime in the neighborhood.
- Don’t put invitations in postal mail boxes - it’s illegal.
- Get a couple of neighbors to walk with you to help deliver invitations.
- Plan an activity for children near the meeting, perhaps ask a teenager to watch them. (Mention this on the invitation to encourage parents to attend.)
- Offer other incentives: food, door prizes, or a chance to “win” money off rent or homeowners’ dues.

## Meeting Logistics

- It is important to select a date and a time for your meeting that is convenient for most of the people invited. You will not be able to accommodate every person, but you should try to appeal to the majority.
- Try to establish a regularly-scheduled meeting day and time. You might meet once a week or once a month, at an interval that best fits the needs and availability of the group.
- You should also select a location convenient for the majority of the group. If you are conducting a Watch group meeting you should probably hold the meeting in the neighborhood.

## Facilitating a Meeting

### At the Meeting

- Be warm and friendly, making a point to say hello to everyone.
- Consider holding an informal social time before or after the meeting.
- Consider providing name badges. This will help with introductions as well as help the instructor to encourage participation
- You might also want to consider an icebreaker exercise in the first couple of meetings.
- Begin and end on time.
- Stick to the schedule you set - it helps establish your credibility in being able to control the meeting.
- Set ground rules, such as time allowed for speaking and adhering to the agenda.
- It may be appropriate to take minutes.

### The Meeting Facilitator should:

- Stay focused on the task at hand to ensure the meeting fulfills its purpose.
- Clearly summarize decisions made and issues that require voting.
- Direct conversations about disagreements so that they do not spiral out of control.
- Allow each person time to speak without dominating the discussion.
- Try to find and resolve sources of confusion, hidden agendas, and emotions.
- As the meeting comes to a close, set the date, time and place for the next meeting.

### After the Meeting:

After the meeting, review how the meeting went and how it could be improved. Effective meetings will not disappoint those in attendance because it will show NW values busy schedules, but encourages people to stay involved. The NW coordinator or block captains should distribute minutes including details about action items and assignments, persons responsible, and timelines.

*Each block captain should follow-up with people who did not attend to see if they had questions about anything discussed. This will encourage people to stay involved, even if they can't attend meetings.*

### Alternatives to Meetings

With overbooked schedules and new ways to communicate, it may be beneficial to maintaining your watch to occasionally hold non-traditional meetings. If you can accomplish the same purpose without meeting in person, consider more time-efficient alternatives such as email, phone, or online chats. If you are simply relaying information to others and feel that the information is not important enough to call a meeting, consider a flyer or some other sort of publication that can be mailed or distributed to group members. Respect each group member's time. If the information provided in person at the meeting is important and valued, then a meeting is appropriate.

## More to Neighborhood Watch than Just Crime

### Creative Meetings Topics:

- Personal Safety
- Rape Prevention
- Safety for the Hearing Impaired
- Street Safety
- Child/Stranger Safety
- Home Security
- Water Safety/Boat Safety
- Awareness & Patrol Techniques
- Observation
- First Aid/CPR
- Animal Control
- Dogs- What to do if attacked
- Scams
- Parent to Parent
- Peer Courts
- School Resource Officer
- Community Policing
- Volunteer Programs
- Emergency Preparedness
- Traffic Team
- Patrol Aspects
- How to be a Witness
- Defensive Driving
- NW Patrolling
- Teen Vehicle Safety
- Conflict Resolution
- Children Services to Families
- Local Fire Station

## Revitalizing & Maintaining Watch Groups

One of the biggest challenges to Neighborhood Watch is maintaining momentum after the problems are “solved.” When NW groups organize around safety concerns, enthusiasm is usually high and participation good. A few months later, the excitement dies down and communication often sags. In order to maintain a strong group, expand the focus of your Watch group. It is important to find other activities to keep your group engaged.

Form a team to actively recruit new members or encourage previous members to attend. Lack of attendance can sometimes be a lack of information. If neighbors are informed about safety and security issues they may be more willing to attend.

Expand NW concerns beyond crime prevention to include quality of life issues and fun activities to build community spirit.

### Recognizing Your Volunteers

People need to feel appreciated when they give up time for their community. In order to keep Watch group members involved and excited, take time out to recognize them. There are two basic forms of recognitions: formal and informal. Formal recognition often occurs in an organized setting such as a recognition dinner, reception etc. Informal recognition includes simple things such as a thank you note. Use the form of recognition that will best motivate your volunteers.

# Neighborhood Watch Skills Using Your “Eyes and Ears”

Once you have established a strong Watch group, it is important to start building skills needed to make your group a success. While NW exists for more than just crime prevention, it is important to build the skills necessary for preventing crime as well as terrorist activity, and preparedness for natural/man-made disasters. The National Sheriffs’ Association offers skill building training through the Neighborhood Watch Toolkit.

## Observation Skills

Most people go through the day without even noticing everyday events. However, beginning to recognize what is normal around you is the first step in recognizing what is not normal. Although law enforcement officers are trained observers, sometimes they find it difficult to explain to citizens what to report and when to report it. While patrolling the streets, officers get used to looking for activities or events that seem out of place or are not part of the regular or ordinary routine. Officers may not be able to articulate specifically what is unusual, but they are keenly aware that something is awry. Officers sometimes refer to this phenomenon as a “sixth sense” or “street smarts,” and they instinctively know when something is not right and they should investigate. Community members should know they have the ability to recognize unusual events as well. It is a matter of practicing Observation Skills to make them stronger.

In order to understand how to properly observe people, vehicles and incidents that may affect us, we should begin by learning what types of things to observe. You should pay attention to things like:

- Physical setting - Specific location, time of day, day of week
- People - What do they look like? (height, weight, ethnicity, gender, etc.) How many are there?
- Specific items - What is important?
- Routines - Did you notice any recurring patterns or routines? How often did they occur? Who was involved?
- One of the keys to a successful Neighborhood Watch program is recognizing the importance of using good observation skills to keep your neighborhood safe.

## Knowing What and How to Report

There are four general categories to consider when determining what to report:

1. suspicious activities
2. people and vehicles
3. illegal activities
4. unusual events or incidents, dangerous situations

***By reporting these types of activities and situations, citizens can make their communities safer and more secure, reduce violence, minimize victimization, reduce crime, and improve the overall quality of life.***

Community members must also be instructed on how to report suspicious activity. To report suspicious activities, crimes in progress or possible terrorist activities, simply:

- Dial 9-1-1 if emergency, if non-emergency call the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's office dispatch at (850)-983-1190
- Tell the call taker what happened and the exact location
- Provide a detailed description of individuals or vehicles
- Remain on the phone and stay calm
- Be prepared to answer follow-up questions

## **What is Suspicious Activity?**

Often citizens ask officers "Why should I get involved?" or "How am I going to benefit by reporting suspicious activity?" Although the answers may seem obvious, it must be clearly communicated that they are an essential component in protecting our communities. Sometimes our citizens receive mixed signals regarding what to report and when to report it. Other times they simply do not know what is expected of them. Suspicious activity can refer to any incident, event, individual or activity that seems unusual or out of place. Some common examples of suspicious activities can include:

- A stranger loitering in your neighborhood or a vehicle cruising the streets repeatedly.
- Someone peering into cars or windows.
- A high volume of traffic going to and coming from a home on a daily basis.
- Someone loitering around schools, parks or secluded areas.
- Strange odors coming from a house, building or vehicle.
- Open or broken doors and windows at a closed business or unoccupied residence.
- Someone tampering with electrical, gas or sewer systems without an identifiable company vehicle or uniform.
- Persons arriving or leaving from homes or businesses at unusual hours.
- Multiple persons who appear to be working in unison and exhibiting suspicious behaviors.

***Neighborhood Watch is not a vigilante program. It doesn't give people the authority to act like police officers, take risks or try to be heroes. And it's not an excuse to poke noses in other people's business.***

## **When to Call 911 and When Not**

Calling 911 is an important communications tool for emergencies. However, some citizens call 911 in non-emergency situations. This can cause the dispatch operator to miss a call of a person needing help.

### **When To Call**

- Medical emergency (i.e.: chest pain, uncontrolled bleeding)
- Motor vehicle accident
- Fire
- When a life is in danger

### **When Not to Call**

- The power is off
- Asking for directions to the hospital
- Requesting to speak with a particular office or officer

# Neighborhood Watch's Expanded Role

In earlier times the role of Neighborhood Watch Programs was primarily centered on what had become the all too common crimes committed by ordinary criminals, bent on breaking into our homes, stealing cars, prowling, peeping, conducting illegal drug activity and threatening our children's safety. As if all these threats to a community's safety are not enough, today we must add the very real threat of terrorist activity. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans have become aware that counting exclusively on law enforcement for protection and safety of our family and community is not sufficient in this changing, more dangerous world. Threats no longer came just from members of the community's criminal element, but also from elements located far outside the boundaries of the traditional American neighborhood. The world suddenly has become a much smaller place. For thirty-five years Watch groups have worked successfully to address crime prevention issues and to restore pride to neighborhoods. Now they face a new challenge: helping local residents become a critical element in the detection, prevention, and disruption of terrorism. Like it or not residents are, more than ever before, key to building safer neighborhoods and protecting themselves.

***By practicing the following common sense guidelines for observing and reporting, you can actively increase safety and security against a potential terrorist act as well as everyday crime and violence.***

- Make sure community members know what kind of suspicious activity to look for and how to report it to the sheriff's office.
- Develop a neighborhood evacuation plan.
- Create a neighborhood communication system with phone numbers and email addresses for all community members.
- Encourage members to develop an individual emergency preparedness plan and share this plan with the entire family.
- Develop a preparedness kit and have supplies for sheltering in place.
- Discuss local warning systems and how to find information on evacuation routes, schedule, and temporary shelters in an emergency.
- Discuss how to report suspicious terrorist activity. Traditionally watch groups reported criminal activity to local law enforcement, but in the case of terrorism it might be more appropriate to report to a local office of Homeland Security or the FBI.

# Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security

One of the newer elements of Neighborhood Watch is the expanded role that now includes awareness and reporting of possible terrorist activities. Since September 11, 2001, the federal government has issued heightened states of alert for local law enforcement, and has urged Americans to remain vigilant for the threat of new terrorist activities. The need for strengthening and securing communities has become more important than ever. For thirty-five years Watch groups have worked successfully to address crime prevention issues and to restore pride to neighborhoods. Now they face a new challenge: helping local residents become a critical element in the detection, prevention, and disruption of terrorism. President Bush has called for all Americans to make disaster preparedness a part of their daily lives. Although government agencies assume most of the responsibility for detecting and preventing terrorism, preparedness is the job of the individual citizens as well. Disaster can strike quickly. Whether a disaster is a natural event, a technological event, or an act of terrorism, the importance of preparedness is the same.

## Disasters: Are you Ready?

- Check with your local fire department to find out about the classes and training they offer in first aid, CPR, fire suppression, and disaster preparedness. C.E.R.T. (Community Emergency Response Teams) includes extensive training for citizens on disaster preparedness for the neighborhood. Some of the subjects include:
  - Disaster first aid.
  - How to triage and set up medical areas.
  - How to fight fires and turn off gas lines.
  - How to inspect buildings and mark them after inspecting.

The first step is making sure your family is safe and you have what you need to stay safe and healthy for the duration and aftermath of a disaster. Supplies must be ready because you usually don't get much warning or time to gather and pack supplies. You should practice fire escape plans and disaster evacuation plans a couple of times a year. This way, if the "real" thing happens, your family will be calm and levelheaded when everyone else is in a panic. Use old suitcases to pack disaster clothing and personal items; they are easy to grab in a hurry. Individuals with disabilities need to plan for special needs. For example, they should have a pair of work gloves attached to the underside of their wheelchair in case they have to roll through debris, broken glass, etc. Don't forget to plan for the supplies your pets will need. Your Watch group should have a list of residents who will need assistance.



# Disaster Preparedness Kit

While it may not be fun to think about a disaster occurring in your community, the chances it may happen are high and the type of disaster varies from where you live. However, your Watch group can make Disaster Preparedness fun by holding a meeting to educate on evacuation plans, then take the time to create Preparedness Kits together. Have each household buy items in bulk, then share with each other in order to reduce costs.

## Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in-place
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, and paper towels
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps

## Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:

- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person.
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy shoes
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

## **Home Security - What you can do as a Resident**

The original purpose of NW was to increase awareness in communities about ways to protect homes from burglaries. Although NW has expanded over the years, protecting homes is still a priority. Since most burglaries and thefts are crimes of opportunity, the more obstacles that we put in place to protect ourselves, the less the chance of our being victimized. In sports, the more defenses a team has, and the better that defense is, the less likely the opponent will be to score. In target hardening, we want to increase our “defense” by identifying multiple methods that you can employ to protect yourself and stop the criminal. Some are common sense methods that cost little or no time or effort, while others may be more complicated. The number of home burglaries are still high and community members should do everything possible to prevent burglaries. When a person falls victim to an attack on their home they feel vulnerable and usually do not recover the stolen property. The Sheriff’s Office can help citizens protect their property not just to keep crime rates low, but also because if their property is stolen, they will likely never see it again.

### **Basic Home Target Hardening Techniques**

When developing a target hardening program to protect against home burglaries, law enforcement can suggest a variety of options. Target hardening can range from the purchase of elaborate alarm systems with every possible type of monitor, to buying a dog that announces the arrival of anyone at your door. NSA offers a Target Hardening course through the Neighborhood Watch Toolkit, or you can contact the Santa Rosa County Sheriff’s Office for assistance in developing strategies. These techniques are designed to assist homeowners in protecting their property by using some simple, cost-effective crime prevention methods. These include using appropriate doors, locks, windows, lighting, appearance, alarms and garages, and provide some helpful hints that range across several categories of safety and security.

### **Assessing the Structure**

When scanning a home, you begin your home burglary risk assessment with the front door and work your way around the house. Start at the entryway of the house or apartment and observe the door, the locks, nearby windows, entry area lighting and the general appearance of the home, as well as other features such as whether an alarm system is present. Next, move counterclockwise around to the side and back where you may encounter a garage, shed or other areas that need to be secured.

### **Doors**

As the primary point of entry for many burglars, the first item to inspect is the front door. Hollow-core or poorly fitting doors can mean trouble, as can front doors that are not equipped with proper deadbolt locks (at least one inch and half in depth). All exterior doors should be metal or solid wood and have strong door hinges on the inside of the door with hidden or non-removable pins. Homeowners should install good quality deadbolt locks on all exterior doors and on any doors that open to attached garages.

## **Locks**

Homeowners should install strong, reliable deadbolt locks extending at least one inch and half when in the locked position. They may also want to consider deadbolts with reinforced strike plates and extra-long mounting screws to anchor the lock. Finally, if there is a change in home ownership, recommend all locks be changed immediately to avoid the possibility that extra keys to the house may be in the hands of unknown individuals. High quality security locks are available at most major market retailers and hardware stores.

## **Windows**

After doors, windows are the next most-utilized access points. Windows can be broken, pried open or lifted from their tracks, or can have their panes removed by thieves. It is important for your windows to have locks on them. Though placing nails or pins in a double hung window can be a fire hazard it can provide extra security when away. You might want to have a professional window expert come out and talk to you about the security of your windows or what you can do to make them more secure.

## **Lighting**

Although lighting is often considered decorative, a well-lighted house can expose individuals attempting to conceal themselves and commit criminal acts. Officers should discuss the use of both interior and exterior lighting. A lighting audit should be completed after dark to be certain you are evaluating artificial illumination and not daylight. It is okay if the night is bright due to moonlight. At least two people will need to work together so you can check for things like color recognition/identification. Working in pairs is also a good idea for reasons of personal safety. In areas less lighted at night you might consider motion detector lighting or sensor lights.

## **Alarms**

The mere presence of some alarm systems may deter potential burglars. Alarm company signs placed in the yard, stickers on the windows and visible contacts or keypads are often enough to cause the average burglar to think twice before trying to break in. Since burglary is a crime of opportunity, the potential thief may decide to move on to a location that does not have an alarm system. There are many types of alarm systems on the market including monitored, non-monitored, audible, wireless, sound based, motion-based, etc. In many jurisdictions, alarm permits must be purchased and there may be penalties for false alarms. The purchase of an alarm system and its accompanying service or monitoring fees can be a major financial commitment, and is one that should be thoroughly researched by the homeowner.

## **Garages**

When it comes to security, the garage is one area of the home that is commonly overlooked. Many garages have electronic garage door openers that give the homeowner a false feeling of security. Another often ignored element of the garage is the door that connects the garage to the house. If this door is not kept secure, then anyone entering the garage can enter the house. In order to increase garage security and house security, residents should always lock the doors connecting a home to an attached garage. They should not rely on an automatic garage door opener for security. At home, people should always park their cars in the garage with the garage door shut. If a burglar notices a pattern where the garage door is left open, or cars are normally parked in the driveway whenever

someone is home, then a closed garage door or no cars in the driveway may be a giveaway that no one is home. Consistency in leaving the cars in the garage behind closed doors will keep from tipping off the burglar that the home is unoccupied. Besides, leaving the garage door open allows strangers to see whatever belongings are stored in the garage. It's a good idea for homeowners to install automatic openers that will allow them to stay in their cars until safely parked in the garage.

*For those without garages it is important that valuables are not left easily seen in the car and that the car is **locked** while in the driveway.*

## Exterior Appearances

Making sure your trees and bushes are trimmed and don't provide secluded shelter for a robber is important. CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED) refers to how to use various crime prevention techniques while maintaining or improving the appearance of the property. Some lessons borrowed from CPTED may include: using fences, walkways, and shrubs to direct visitor access, limit entry or call attention to individuals who have deviated from the designated pathway; planting thorny bushes around windows to make illegal entry more difficult; trimming shrubs and trees that could conceal criminals; cutting back tree limbs that might allow thieves to climb into windows; and using landscaping designs that provide maximum visibility to and from the house.

# Neighborhood Watch Do's & Don'ts

## Do:

- Report suspicious activity immediately to law enforcement, not the Neighborhood Watch coordinator or Block Captain.
- Report all crimes to the police.
- Learn what's normal in your neighborhood.
- Take a pro-active stance against crime.
- Encourage others to participate in Neighborhood Watch, invite new residents to join neighborhood watch.
- Attend Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- Obtain full descriptions and license numbers of suspicious people and their vehicles and report immediately to the police.
- Participate in operation identification.

## Don't:

- Don't take the law into your own hands.
- Don't approach suspicious people. You should never attempt to apprehend a suspect
- Don't stop criminals committing crimes.
- Don't pull over cars on patrol or any time.
- Don't take unnecessary risks to obtain information on suspicious people or crimes.
- Don't hesitate to call police.
- A Checklist for Starting a Neighborhood Watch Program

# A Checklist for Starting a Neighborhood Watch Program

- ✓ A person or group of people committed to starting a Neighborhood Watch.
- ✓ A planning committee to initiate the program.
- ✓ A list of what issues initially need to be addressed in your community.
- ✓ A means of communicating with the residents, e-mail, fliers, telephone trees.
- ✓ Publicity for the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting.
- ✓ A meeting agenda to keep things moving and on track.
- ✓ A place to meet-resident's house or apartment, community center, school, library.
- ✓ A crime prevention officer to discuss the crime issues in the neighborhood and to help train members.
- ✓ A map of the community with spaces for names, addresses, and phone numbers of all households.
- ✓ A sign-up sheet for those interested in becoming block or building captains.
- ✓ Brochures or other materials on topics of interest to the residents.
- ✓ Neighborhood Watch signs to be posted around the community.
- ✓ Number of participants before Neighborhood Watch signs can be posted.

## To Add Excitement

- ✓ Mix business with pleasure, allow attendees time to socialize.
- ✓ Seek out neighborhood go-getters, civic leaders and elected officials to be your advocates and mentors.
- ✓ Work with such existing organizations as citizens' association, tenants' association, or housing authorities.
- ✓ Provide speakers on topics of community interest.
- ✓ Link crime prevention into activities promoted by other groups: child protection, anti-vandalism projects,
- ✓ Start a neighborhood newsletter.
- ✓ Arrange for McGruff the Crime Dog to make a surprise appearance at a meeting, rally, or other event.
- ✓ Community service, arson prevention, recreation activities for young people.

## To Build Partnerships

- ✓ Law Enforcement endorsement is critical to a Watch group's credibility. These agencies are the major sources of information on local crime patterns, crime prevention education, and crime reporting.
- ✓ Local businesses and organizations can help provide fliers and a newsletter, offer meeting places, and distribute crime prevention information. Ask an electronics store to donate cellular phones.
- ✓ Libraries can provide research materials, videos, computers, and meeting space.
- ✓ Media can aid Neighborhood Watches by publicizing recruitment drives.
- ✓ Look to volunteer centers, parent groups, and labor unions for advice on recruiting volunteers.
- ✓ Places of worship can provide meeting space and a good source of volunteers.

# Disaster Preparedness Checklist:

- ✓ Make a list of important phone numbers, such as nonemergency numbers for the police and fire departments, FBI field office, and local emergency management office, and post it by your telephone.
- ✓ Make sure children know how to dial 911 in an emergency.
- ✓ Develop a communications plan for your family. Choose someone who does not live with you (preferably out-of-town) that you and other family members can contact to check on each other in the event that you are separated during a disaster. Carry the number in your wallet.
- ✓ Establish a meeting place for family members if home or neighborhood evacuation is necessary. (Pick one place near your home and one outside your neighborhood in case you can't return after a disaster.)
- ✓ Take a basic course in CPR and first-aid.
- ✓ Learn how to turn off water, gas, and electricity at main switches.
- ✓ Learn about emergency plans for your children's school or day care center.
- ✓ Draw a floor plan of your home and mark two escape routes from each room. Practice your evacuation plan.
- ✓ Know your community's evacuation routes.
- ✓ Work with your Neighborhood Watch group or civic association to create a community disaster preparedness plan.
- ✓ Assemble an emergency preparedness kit that contains the following
  - ✓ supplies:
    - ✓ 3-5 days' supply of water (one gallon per person per day)
    - ✓ food that will not spoil and requires no cooking
    - ✓ first-aid kit and needed medicine
    - ✓ emergency tools, such as a battery-powered radio, cell phone, flashlight
    - ✓ extra batteries
    - ✓ personal items like toilet paper and plastic garbage bags
    - ✓ change of clothing and blankets for each person
    - ✓ Portable generator if possible

# Vacation Checklist

- ✓ Mow the lawn
- ✓ Stop all deliveries
- ✓ Arrange with a trusted neighbor to
  - Bring in your mail daily
  - Periodically change position of drapes
  - Keep lawn trimmed and pick up trash if you are going to be gone an extended amount of time
  - Watch your house for suspicious activity
- ✓ If you have an open carport, leave a second car (yours or your neighbors) positioned so that a van cannot pull in
- ✓ Use an automatic timer to operate your inside lights at night
- ✓ Turn the bell/ringer down on your house phone so that someone outside cannot hear the phone continually ringing - or forward your house phone to your cell phone.
- ✓ Don't inform anyone of your departure except those whom you contacted to watch your house. (Don't post about it on Social Media)
- ✓ When buying vacation articles, be cautious of sales persons. Don't give your address if at all possible
- ✓ Ensure that you have completed the home inventory list before you leave.
- ✓ The day before you leave, call the district office of Santa Rosa Sheriff's Office for the district you live to ask for a patrol on your house while you are out of town.
- ✓ Lock all exterior doors and windows - including your garage - before you leave.



## Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office

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