

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

## WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?

Neighborhood watch programs are intended to build a sense of community while keeping crime out of your neighborhood. A neighborhood watch meeting is like a community gathering where residents come together to discuss and address local safety concerns. It's a proactive way to enhance neighborhood security by fostering communication and collaboration among residents. Typically, these meetings involve discussions about recent incidents, sharing safety tips, and planning strategies to prevent and address potential issues. The most effective approach to fighting crime is a proactive one - stopping it before it occurs. This can happen when neighbors cooperate with each other to assist the Department.

## EXPECTATIONS

- Neighborhood watch groups and meeting are self-coordinated and run.
- Neighborhood watch is a partnership between neighbors to assist the APD in the reduction and fear of crime.
- Neighborhood watch does not require frequent meetings.
- Neighborhood watch does not ask anyone to take personal risks to prevent crime.
- Neighborhood watch is a great way to keep everyone informed and circulate ideas.
- When appropriate, invite different subject matter experts to expose neighbors to new technologies, topics, or crime prevention techniques. APD personnel can be requested to attend occasional meetings to answer questions about crime and provide information about the current crime trends.

## REPORTING EMERGENCY

For situations when there is an immediate threat to life, property, or public safety.

- 911
- 510-522-2423

## NON-EMERGENCY

For situations that do not pose an immediate risk to life or safety but still require police, fire, or other services to address the situation

- 510-337-8340

## EMERGENCY TEXT

For emergency situations when it is unsafe to make a voice call.

- Type "911" in the sender field

## ONLINE REPORTING

For non-emergency situations where the sole purpose is to document the incident.

- [www.alamedapolice.org](http://www.alamedapolice.org)

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## HOW DO I START A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM?

**Gauge Interest:** Talk to your neighbors to see if there's interest in forming a neighborhood watch. You can do this through informal conversations, social media, or by distributing flyers. If there is interest, but lack of participation, remind your neighbors of the following:

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**Schedule a Meeting:** Choose a convenient time and location for the first meeting. It could be at a community center, someone's home, or a local park. Make sure to advertise the meeting to maximize attendance.

**Create an Agenda:** Plan what you want to cover in the first meeting. This might include introducing the concept of a neighborhood watch, discussing local safety concerns, brainstorming ideas for improvement, or inviting guest speakers.

Use your first meeting as an opportunity to get to know each other, assign roles, discuss recent events, share safety tips, and begin creating a neighborhood map and/or directory.

- Distribute nametags/introductions
- Make opening remarks
- Provide simple refreshments to create a relaxed atmosphere.

### **Select a Block Captain.**

The role of the Block Captain (or Co-Captains) is to:

- Oversee and arrange neighborhood watch meetings.
- Create the meeting's agenda.
- Be a spokesperson for the group.
- Serve as a liaison between APD and the neighborhood watch group.
- Recruit neighbors to share the responsibility of hosting meetings.
- Maintain a list of all members.
- Designate work assignments such as enrolling new members, vacation home watch, block parents, neighborhood patrol, fund-raising, secretarial duties, developing and maintaining block maps and crime prevention material distribution.

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**Develop and Distribute Maps:** A map will help members give APD precise information when reporting suspicious activity in your neighborhood.

- Identify the Block Captain(s).
- Provide the name and addresses of homes and identify the ones with burglar alarms.
- Identify seniors and/or neighbors with health or mobility problems who may need special attention.
- List the make, model and license plate numbers of vehicles at each home. Help neighbors by letting them know which vehicles belong there during daytime hours.
- Update and reissue maps when any information changes.

**Gather and share information:** Knowing more about your neighbors, their vehicles, and their daily routines will help you recognize unusual or suspicious activities. Consider exchanging the following types of basic information with your neighbors:

- Home and work telephone numbers.
- Names, ages, and the number of family members or residents.
- Work hours.
- School or day-care hours of children.
- Planned vacations or visitors.
- Scheduled deliveries or repairs.

## MAINTAINING A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

After your neighborhood watch is established, be sure everyone understands and observes the following guidelines:

- Be alert to unusual or suspicious behavior in your neighborhood. Write down descriptions of suspicious person(s) and license numbers and call APD when necessary.
- Tell a trusted neighbor if your house will be unoccupied for an extended period.
- Look after your neighbor's homes when they are away and ask them to look after yours. This includes picking up mail, newspapers and storing trashcans or recycling bins.
- Remember your job is to report the crime, leave the apprehending of criminals to the police.

Remember, the success of a neighborhood watch depends on active participation and ongoing communication. It's a great way to build a stronger, safer community!

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## GUEST SPEAKER & TOPIC IDEAS

- Cyber security expert
- Home security expert
- City planner or urban designer
- Self-defense instructor
- Fire prevention
- Beat officer
- Drug prevention specialist
- Social services or CARE Team representative
- Security camera representative
- Alarm system company
- Identity theft protection / fraud prevention expert
- Psychologist / counselor to address psychological aspects of safety, such as managing stress or fear.
- Emergency preparedness coordinator / CERT (AFD)

## REPORTING A CRIME

Eyewitness information is the key to solving many crimes. The following tips will assist you when reporting a crime to the APD.

Tell dispatchers/officers as much as you can. You may be asked the following when reporting a crime:

- Who, What, When, and Where?
- How many suspects were there?
- Can you describe the suspect(s)?
- Can you describe their vehicle(s)?
- What was/were the license plate number(s)?
- What did they do?
- What did they say?
- What did they take?
- Which way did they go?

As a reminder on how APD dispatches calls for service, we prioritize resources based on apparent danger to human life on in-progress crimes that can result in personal safety. Officers will arrive as soon as possible. Do not attempt to stop or detain the suspect(s) yourself.

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## WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY?

Anything that seems even slightly "out of place" or is occurring at an unusual time of day or night could be considered criminal activity. The following are some obvious things to watch for:

- A stranger entering your neighbor's house when it is unoccupied.
- Screams or yelling for help could indicate a person is in distress or a crime is in progress.
- Anyone removing accessories, license plates, or gas from a vehicle should be reported.
- Anyone peering into parked vehicles.
- Persons checking car door handles.
- Persons entering or leaving a place of business after hours.
- The sound of breaking glass or loud explosive noises.
- Persons loitering around schools, parks and secluded areas.
- Persons appearing to tamper with locks or secured areas.
- Vehicles and/or individuals following mail carriers and appearing to take mail and/packages after they have been delivered.
- Anyone forcing entry to, or tampering with a residence, business, or vehicle should be reported.

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