

# **Neighborhood Watch: A PLANNING GUIDE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH**

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**A PROJECT OF:  
THE METRO NASHVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
MADISON PRECINCT**

## **What is Neighborhood Watch?**

Police Departments across the country are learning that community participation in anti-crime programs is essential. One of the most effective ways to promote citizen interaction with police is the sharing of information. Citizen groups determine specific needs or problems and then share this information with local police. The police then act on this information and report back to the group on their progress. This program also works when the police go to public groups and organizations and make them aware of specific criminal activities or the needs of the police department.

The **Neighborhood Watch** concept is designed to target specific geographical areas and to assist citizens in these areas to;

- Establish an organizational structure and create an information sharing network.
- Help to introduce neighbors and create social ties that will help them work together.
- Allow police to train citizens on how to be proactive by preventing crime and how to recognize and report criminal activities.
- Access information and assistance from police and other Government agencies that can help to improve living conditions.
- Provide the community with a strong unified voice to inform community leaders on programs and actions that the "people" support.

Neighborhood watch cannot only be utilized as a strong tool to fight crime; it is also a strong social organization. It can also be utilized to enact other projects such as Community Clean Up, Bus Stop Safety Watch for children and locating and assisting citizens with special needs.

Neighborhood Watch is not a vigilante organization! It promotes awareness techniques and reporting crime not physical confrontation of criminals.

## **So, how do I start?**

**The first step is to discuss interest in organizing with neighbors in your area. You should obtain a map and clearly define the boundaries for your watch area. (Start small, less than 50 residences, you can expand as you become more organized.) Distribute a flyer or go door to door and let the people in your area have input on this project.**

Step two is to begin planning your first neighborhood meeting. Call your local precinct (see numbers listed below) and schedule a date when an officer can come to speak to your group about the Neighborhood Watch concept. After setting the date, select and secure a location, close to your area, to hold the meeting. Local churches and schools are usually very cooperative. Advertising the meeting is very important! Be creative with handouts and personal or phone contacts. Let everyone know when and where the meeting will be held.

The first meeting is basically a social event and an information sharing time. The police officer, who will be speaking to your group, will tell you about Nashville, your police department and how Neighborhood Watch can help your community. The primary goal of the first meeting is to gauge the expected participation in the project and to create an understanding for the need for Neighborhood Watch.

After the first meeting you will need to begin selecting the NHW director and the Block Captains. You will need either a single individual to fill the director's position or a team. You will then need one Block Captain for every 10 homes.

### **The NHW Director:**

The Director is responsible for 3 main tasks:

1. Primary Contact with the Police Department. The Director passes non-emergency information from the NHW Directly to the Crime Prevention Officer. The Director also receives information from the Crime Prevention Officer and passes it to the Block Captains.
2. The Director organizes date, time, and location for NHW meetings and for information sharing meetings with the Block Captains.
3. The Director also reviews tips and information on suspected criminal activities within the NHW area and looks for patterns or for potential suspects. This information is received from Block Captains who create written documentation of suspicious activities.

### **The Block Captain:**

The Block Captain is the primary link in the NHW chain of command. There should be no more than 10 homes per Block Captain. The duties include a wide range of simple tasks:

1. Meet each resident in your assigned area and offer to register them in the NHW.
2. Maintain an emergency phone list of all your assigned residents.
3. Be available to pass on information about criminal activities in your area. (Notice: You may be called late at night if one of your residents spot suspicious activities.)
4. Forward information to the NHW Director and activate the phone tree if you receive information on a suspect in your area. (The "phone tree" involves calling NHW members and informing them if there is an active incident going on in the area.)
5. The Block Captain also coordinates assistance programs if there are any special needs in their area and may set up social events for their members to become involved in.

## **The Neighborhood Watch Members:**

The most important part of a NHW are the members. Being a NHW member is not a hard or time consuming job. It mostly involves becoming aware of activities in your area and taking time to report them.

1. Observe and report any suspicious activities. Report the non-emergency activities to your Block Captain by phone or on a 3x5 card. Emergencies or a crime in progress should be reported to the police (911) and then to the Block Captain.
2. Be willing to serve as an acting Block Captain in the absence of your area Block Captain or to assist the Block Captain with projects in your block.
3. Attend monthly or quarterly meetings of the NHW group.

## **The best weapons in a NHW**

### **The Kick Off Day:**

After the first meeting and when your group has finished the initial organizing, you need to have a day to officially start the NHW. This will be the Kick Off Day.

We recommend that you pick a weekend or evening when everyone in the NHW will be invited to a special event such as a block party or a community rally. It never hurts to have food and special events planned. Try to have the meeting outside in or near your NHW area. This will draw attention to your group and will encourage others in the area to want to become a part of your program.

You will need to invite your area Metro Councilman, the Mayor's Office and the Police Officers who patrol your area. This will give you a chance to meet them and to tell them your problems and to make special requests. You may also wish to invite the media to cover your events. This is a good way to tell the community about your program and how your neighborhood is fighting back against Crime.

At the Kick Off event you may want to unveil or plant your NHW street signs. We provide 2 NHW signs and posts to active NHW programs. These signs should be placed on property near the beginning and end of your watch area.

## LET'S REVIEW...

Neighborhood Watch organizational schedule.

1. Discuss the need for NHW in your area with your neighbors.
2. Map out the area for your NHW.
3. Contact your local precinct (see contact numbers below) to schedule a speaker.
4. Secure a place and time for the first meeting.
5. Advertise the meeting to your NHW area.
6. Have the first meeting.
7. After the meeting begin selecting the Director(s) and the Block Captains.
8. The Director should call a meeting with the Block Captains to plan which form you will use to register the members and to select a target date for the Kick Off.
9. Block Captains should make contact and attempt to register every home in your assigned block.
10. Compile a master list of all members.
11. Plan the Kick Off meeting and invite the members and guests.
12. Advertise the Kick Off day.
13. Have the Big Kick Off.
14. Work with the police to reduce crime!

### Phone numbers to remember:

<b>Metro Police</b>	
Emergency	911
Non-emergency	862-8600
Madison Precinct	880-3111
Central Precinct	862-7611
East Precinct	862-7600
Hermitage Precinct	880-1776
North Precinct	862-4410
South Precinct	862-7744
West Precinct	862-7747
<b>Metro Fire Dept</b>	
Emergency	911
Non-emergency	862-8600
<b>Other</b>	
Dept. of Public Works	862-8750
Metro Council	862-6780
Office of the Mayor	862-6000