

Neighborhood Watch Information

What is a Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is one of the oldest and most effective crime prevention programs in the country, bringing citizens together with law enforcement to deter crime and make communities safer.

Sponsored by the [National Sheriffs' Association](#) (NSA), Neighborhood Watch can trace its roots back to the days of colonial settlements, when night watchmen patrolled the streets. The modern version of Neighborhood Watch was developed in response to requests from sheriffs and police chiefs who were looking for a crime prevention program that would involve citizens and address an increasing number of burglaries.

Launched in 1972, Neighborhood Watch counts on citizens to organize themselves and work with law enforcement to keep a trained eye and ear on their communities, while demonstrating their presence at all times of day and night. (The program took off quickly: in just ten years, NSA data showed that 12 percent of the population was involved in a Neighborhood Watch.) Neighborhood Watch works because it reduces opportunities for crime to occur; it doesn't rely on altering or changing the criminal's behavior or motivation.

How do you become a member of a Neighborhood Watch?

Contact the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator (NWC) to register with the NW. You may need to get the NWC's information from your HOA Representative.

Members Role in a Neighborhood Watch

The NWC will host meetings periodic throughout the year for members to attend and receive the latest information on activities and programs the NW may be conducting. Please attend those meetings.

Be a "window watcher" and report things of importance, such as suspicious persons/activity, roadway hazards, general safety hazards in the neighborhood, suggestions for neighborhood security/safety improvements, etc.

Be a good neighbor! Be aware of what is going on around your house and neighborhood and help those who need assistance. We have many residents who are elderly and don't get out much. Developing a basic relationship with them can improve their quality of life, not to mention yours as well!

Annually, on a National level, Neighborhood Watch Programs host a "National Night Out" event on the same night every year. In most States, that is on the first Tuesday of August, to be held at a safe location in your community. Texas and a few other areas celebrate the first Tuesday of October.

Who to contact and when?

Depending on what you are reporting will depend on who you contact. If you want to report a suspicious person/activity or criminal activity, then notifying the local police department is the most effective thing to do. After the situation is under control, then contact the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator (NWC) advising them of what has occurred. They will in-turn notify the other residents in the neighborhood.

If you need to report an issue that is related to the HOA, then contact the HOA representative.

If you wish to make suggestions or have other information to share about the Neighborhood Watch Program, contact the NWC.

What is National Night Out?

National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, better places to live.

Neighborhoods across the nation host block parties, festivals, parades, cookouts and other community events with safety demos, seminars, youth events, and visits from emergency personnel. For example, the Fire Departments will come out parking a Fire Engine at your event, allowing the children in the community to get to know the firefighters and their equipment to reduce any anxiety they may have.

In addition, local law enforcement officers will attend your events to enhance the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. It furthermore provides an opportunity to bring police and neighbors together.

So, when planning your annual community event, make sure you invite your emergency service professionals.

The National Night Out Organization: <https://natw.org/about>

How do NW members communicate with one another?

The method of communication is up to the individual community. Establishing a Phone Tree and an Email Tree can prove to be very reliable. Once neighbors get to know one another, they can share their contact information to enhance their ability to communicate.

The NWC can release periodic Email notifications to the members allowing the members to receive the information and read it at their leisure. For those who do not use Email, the NWC would need to call the members by phone or leave notices on their doors.

Clearly, Email is the most efficient method of communication regarding upcoming events and activities. For Emergencies, the telephone is the most efficient method.

Tips for developing and maintaining a neighborhood watch:

- Notify community members via flyers or mailers that a NW is being developed. Email notification can be used as well if the NWC has access to that information
 - Hold a Community Meeting to get the NW off the ground.
 - Register as many residents as members and establish the best possible method of communication; Email Tree, Phone Tree, Flyers, Mailers.
 - Work with the police or sheriff's office. These agencies are critical to a Watch group's credibility and are the source of necessary information and training.
 - Link up with your victims' services office to get your members trained in helping victims of crime.
 - Hold regular meetings to help residents get to know each other and to decide upon program strategies and activities.
 - Consider linking with an existing organization, such as a citizens' association, community development office, tenants' association, or housing authority. They may be able to provide an existing infrastructure you can use.
 - Canvass door-to-door to recruit members.
 - Ask people who seldom leave their homes to be "window watchers," looking out for children and reporting any unusual activities in the neighborhood.
 - Translate crime and drug prevention materials into Spanish or other languages needed by non-English speakers in your community. If necessary, have a translator at meetings.
 - Sponsor a crime and drug prevention fair at a church hall, temple, shopping mall, or community center.
 - Gather the facts about crime in your neighborhood. Check police reports, conduct victimization surveys, and learn residents' perceptions about crimes. Often, residents' opinions are not supported by facts, and accurate information can reduce the fear of crime.
 - Physical conditions like abandoned cars or overgrown vacant lots contribute to crime. Sponsor cleanups, encourage residents to beautify the area, and ask them to turn on outdoor lights at night.
 - Work with small businesses to repair rundown storefronts, clean up littered streets, and create jobs for young people.
 - Start a block parent program to help children cope with emergencies while walking to and from school or playing in the area.
 - Emphasize that Watch groups are not vigilantes and should not assume the role of the police. Their duty is to ask neighbors to be alert, observant, and caring—and to report suspicious activity or crimes immediately to the police.
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