



## NOBLESVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT



### Neighborhood Crime Watch Program

## ADMINISTRATION and PROCEDURES

### Neighborhood Crime Watch Program

The Noblesville Police Department recognizes that community participation in crime prevention programs is essential to improving the quality of life in the City of Noblesville. One of the most effective ways to promote citizen interaction with police is the sharing of information. The Neighborhood Watch Program encourages this partnership between the police and the community. It is a program of neighbors watching out for other neighbors, particularly during times when criminal activity would likely occur. Neighborhood Watch Programs are a means by which citizens can address immediate crime problems, focus on home security, and build neighborhood cohesion.

Burglary, auto theft, rape, crimes against children, and arson are some of the most common neighborhood crimes around the country. One of the most frequently committed crimes in the nation is burglary, and it is also one of the easiest crimes to commit and one of the most difficult for police to solve. Burglary is a crime of opportunity, committed by criminals who capitalize on carelessness or neglect. Most home burglaries are not committed by professionals who have planned to commit a burglary. Most are committed by amateurs who find an open or unlocked door, window, or garage door. Nationwide, the majority of home burglaries occur during daylight hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

To combat the increase in crime in today's society, the police need the eyes and ears of citizens like you. To help the police protect your property from criminals, you must get involved.

The Noblesville Police Department would like you to start or join a Neighborhood Crime Watch Program and learn what you can do to reduce your chances of becoming a crime victim. A Neighborhood Crime Watch is easy to start and effective when implemented. By starting a Neighborhood Watch Program in your area, you are taking the first step towards making your home, your neighborhood, and your community a safer place to live.

**The following questions or issues are explained in detail below.**

Why do you need a Neighborhood Crime Watch?

How does it work? How to start a Neighborhood Watch Program Neighborhood Coordinator's responsibilities Block Captain's responsibilities conducting the Startup Meeting with the Noblesville Police Department's Crime Watch Manager Suggestions for the Startup Meeting and Subsequent Meetings Receiving and Keeping the Neighborhood Crime Watch signs Getting the Most out of the Program

## Why do you need a Neighborhood Crime Watch?

It is obvious that the police cannot be everywhere and see everything at all times. The police need you to be their eyes and ears when they are not around. The police need you to call when you see a crime take place or suspicious activity in your neighborhood. You above all people will know what suspicious activity in your neighborhood is because you know who belongs in your neighborhood. For most neighborhood crimes the police cannot make an arrest without a witness to the crime or a formal complaint by the victim. You empower the police to make arrests. The police are there to help you protect your neighborhood, not to do it alone.

## How does it work?

Many citizens see crimes and suspicious activity in a neighborhood and never call the police. Some are afraid of retaliation by the criminal and some feel it is not their problem if it does not affect them directly. In a Neighborhood Crime Watch, neighbors make a commitment to each other to call the police when they see a crime or suspicious activity in the neighborhood. In addition, they notify other neighbors of the criminal activity. Including other neighbors can help in visually tracking the activity of the suspect and provide other potential witnesses for the police. Those who are timid about getting involved will feel more secure by having other neighbors participating. There will always be security in numbers, and criminals feel intimidated by active crime prevention neighborhoods. Criminal activity is a neighborhood problem, and crime is reduced when the rest of the neighborhood gets involved.

## How to start a Neighborhood Watch Program

**Contact the Noblesville Police Department's Community Outreach Coordinator:** The first step in starting a Neighborhood Watch is to have a representative from your neighborhood contact the Noblesville Police Department in order to express your interest.

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Community Outreach Coordinator  
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The officer will assist you in getting started and will explain the necessary steps that must be taken to qualify for the program. One of the first things the officer will do is explain the necessary forms to you. The forms will contain information about the Program and will include the petition that must be signed by a minimum of 20% of the households in your respective community.

## **Talk to your neighbors**

Now is the time to start canvassing your neighborhood to see if there is enough interest within in the community to start a Watch Program. Discuss the crime problems in the area and how neighbors working together can help to prevent crime. As a reminder, each community must have a minimum of 20% of the households represented before the Crime Watch Program can be initiated.

Be sure to emphasize the following points:

- Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings.
- The Program does not ask that anyone take any personal risks to prevent crime.
- Neighborhood Watch leaves the responsibility for apprehension of criminals with law enforcement, where it belongs.

Once 20% of the households have signed the petition and made the commitment to participate, a Coordinator and Block Captains must be established.

## **Neighborhood Coordinator's Responsibilities:**

- The Neighborhood Coordinator will serve as the liaison between the neighborhood and the Noblesville Police Department's Community Outreach Coordinator and shall maintain the program and provide feedback to residents.
- The coordinator organizes and administers the initial meeting with the Noblesville Police Department's Community Outreach Coordinator as well as regularly scheduled bi-annual meetings with Block Captains and residents. The Coordinator will keep the Community Outreach Coordinator informed of the dates and times of all scheduled meetings.
- The coordinator is responsible for maintaining the bi-annual attendance roster for meetings.
- The coordinator locates volunteers to serve as Block Captains for a group of homes that typically range from 8 to 20 households.
- The coordinator collects and maintains a list of the names, addresses, and phone numbers of each Block Captain's households to create a master list for the neighborhood.
- The coordinator distributes Crime Watch material to Block Captains as necessary.

## **Block Captain's Responsibilities:**

- The Block Captains serve as a liaison between the residents and the Neighborhood Coordinator.
- Block Captains serve a group of homes that typically range between 8 and 20 households.
- Block Captains will be responsible for obtaining a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the residents assigned to their respective block and keeping that list updated. This list is then forwarded to the Neighborhood Coordinator to create a master list.
- Block Captains will distribute information as necessary amongst residents of their designated block.

## **Conducting the Startup Meeting with NPD's Community Outreach Coordinator**

At this point, your petition has been completed with at least 20% of the households acknowledging their pledge to actively participate and that petition has been forwarded to the Community Outreach Coordinator. The Community Outreach Coordinator will now work with you to determine a date for your first meeting with the residents. This first meeting, as well as the other mandated meetings, must have at least a 20% representation in attendance. The Community Outreach Coordinator will be present at this meeting in order to explain and answer any questions that the residents might have about the Program and their responsibilities. The Community Outreach Coordinator will also present past and recent crime statistics and provide information that will assist the residents with being aware of what is happening in their community. The Community Outreach Coordinator will suggest specific strategies to reduce the chance of victimization and the procedure by which citizens should report potential criminal activity.

The Neighborhood Crime Watch signs will be presented to the Neighborhood Coordinator during this meeting but the installation and placement will be conducted by the Noblesville Police Department.

### **Suggestions for the Startup Meeting and Bi-Annual Meetings**

It is recommended that the Startup Meeting take place indoors with ample room to accommodate all the participants. This is generally one of the largest meetings that will take place due to its informative nature. The Community Outreach Coordinator will work with you to determine if there are any special needs that will be required for the presentation such as electrical outlets, extension cords, and access to lighting controls.

All subsequent meetings will be scheduled and advertised as part of the responsibilities of the Neighborhood Crime Watch Coordinator. The meetings do not need to be extravagant in nature and can be formal or informal. These meetings are to serve as an opportunity to get neighbors acquainted with each other, to disperse information, and to share any concerns.

In order to make your meetings more interesting and help encourage attendance, contact the Community Outreach Coordinator and see if there is a possibility that someone could come give a short presentation. The Noblesville Police Department encourages that this be done at least once a year to review any current or past trends in activity.

Lastly, be sure to document attendance at each function. You must submit your attendance rosters to the Community Outreach Coordinator each time you have a meeting. This ensures that your signs will not be removed.

## **Receiving and Keeping the Neighborhood Crime Watch Signs**

The Noblesville Police Department has specific guidelines for receiving and keeping Neighborhood Crime Watch Signs.

## Receiving Neighborhood Crime Watch Signs

The Neighborhood Crime Watch signs signify to all persons (residents, visitors, passers-by, and potential criminals) that this particular neighborhood has taken a stance to be actively involved in watching out for one another. It represents a community that is committed to the prevention and overall reduction in crime in their specific neighborhood, and it serves notice to everyone that you are watching. With that said, it is imperative that all Neighborhood Watch Programs maintain a minimum set of standards to ensure the continued integrity and effectiveness of the program.

The following are guidelines for **receiving** Neighborhood Crime Watch signs:

- The Neighborhood Crime Watch signs will always be property of the Noblesville Police Department and will retain final authority on their distribution.
- The signs will be positioned and installed at the direction of the Noblesville Police Department.
- The signs will not be installed until all Program requirements have been met to include a representative contacting the Community Outreach Coordinator, a petition containing signatures from a minimum of 20% of the households within the neighborhood has been submitted, and the initial startup meeting with the Community Outreach Coordinator has taken place with at least 20% of the households being represented.
- The Noblesville Police Department covers all costs associated with the purchase and installation of the signs.
- The signs are generally posted at the main entrance(s) to the neighborhood where they can be easily seen.

The following are guidelines for **keeping** Neighborhood Crime Watch signs:

- The Noblesville Police Department reserves the right to remove any and all of their Neighborhood Crime Watch signs when it has been determined that a Crime Watch Neighborhood has not remained active by attaining the minimum standards relating to bi-annual meetings and attendance requirements.
- Each Neighborhood Crime Watch must have a minimum of two meetings each year with at least 20% attendance in order to keep signs posted.

## Getting the Most Out of the Program

Now that your Neighborhood Crime Watch is established, it's time to make it work. It is highly recommended that everyone understands and observes the following guidelines:

- Attend Watch meetings.
- Be suspicious and report any unusual activity to the Noblesville Police Department. Try to write down descriptions of person(s) and license numbers of any vehicles.
- Keep a trusted neighbor informed if your house will be unoccupied for an extended period of time. It is important to leave that neighbor a way of reaching you if an emergency should arise.

- Look after your neighbor's house when they are away, and ask them to do the same for you. This would include collecting mail, newspapers, and other items that might indicate at a glance that no one is home.
- Above all, be concerned. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe. Spending a few extra seconds watching strangers walking or driving through your neighborhood is often enough to prevent many crimes.
- And remember...your job is to report crime. The responsibility for apprehending criminals belongs to the police.

Additional things that all residents can do to help protect themselves and their property:

- Conduct a Home Security Inspection Checklist self-assessment on your residence.
- Participate in Operation Identification (Operation I.D.) by conducting an inventory of all of your valuables and recording make/model, manufacturer serial numbers or identification numbers that you have affixed with an engraver, and take a photo of each. Place this list in a secure place in the event that you are burglarized or become a victim of theft. This information will assist in the identification and recovery process should the items be located.
- Improve home security by adding an alarm or monitoring system.
- Keep your home secure, locking doors/windows and closing overhead garage doors whenever possible.
- Trim bushes around windows and doors.
- Take advantage of as much lighting around your house as possible to include security lights, porch lights, landscape lighting, and garage lights. Refrain from changing garage lights to different colors to reflect holidays. This diminishes their effectiveness and makes you more vulnerable.
- Be sure to lock car doors and roll up windows whenever your vehicle is left unattended. Unlocked car doors are the leading cause of vehicle thefts and thefts from vehicles.
- Get to know your neighbors and allow them the opportunity to get to know you, even if they do not elect to be an active member in the Program. Share with them your telephone number and keep them informed of information that is disseminated at the meetings.
- Keep your property well maintained as this will serve to put potential criminals on notice that you are conscientious about your property.

## **Additional Questions**

Please feel free to contact the Noblesville Police Department's Community Outreach Coordinator if you have any additional questions concerning this program.

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