



Promoting a culture of civic engagement by connecting and supporting all Portlanders working together and with government to build inclusive, safe and livable neighborhoods and communities.

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This document is available at the
ONI website:

www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp

Establishing Your Neighborhood Watch

Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention Program
Fall 2014

What is Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is a program designed to increase the safety and sense of community in neighborhoods by organizing and involving individuals and families in a united crime prevention effort. Neighborhood Watch participants learn how to:

- Communicate regularly with their neighbors using tools specific to Neighborhood Watch
- Recognize and report suspicious and criminal activity
- Increase home and vehicle security
- Increase personal safety of residents
- Make neighborhoods less attractive to criminals

When neighbors take the responsibility to build and maintain livable and cohesive neighborhoods, those neighborhoods are less vulnerable to crime. Under Neighborhood Watch, involved neighbors collaborate with the City's Crime Prevention Coordinators, police, neighborhood coalitions and associations, schools, parks personnel, area businesses, and others to create a united, secure, and peaceful community.

Purpose of Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch has several purposes:

- **To help reduce crime and fear of crime in our neighborhoods.** When an organized Neighborhood Watch exists in an area, it can serve as a deterrent to criminal activity, as well as give residents a sense of safety so they can better enjoy their homes and neighborhoods.
- **To help ensure a prompt and effective response to neighborhood crime and livability problems.** Trained Neighborhood Watch members are in a good position to notice problems within a neighborhood, such as burglaries, vandalism, abandoned vehicles, illegal dump sites, evidence of drug dealing or manufacturing, and street prostitution, and they know where to report these problems in order to get a quicker, more effective solution.
- **To promote positive communication and relationships within a neighborhood.** Neighborhood Watch provides an avenue for neighbors to get to know one another and build a sense of community.

Types of Neighborhood Watch

A Neighborhood Watch is often formed when neighbors notice a problem in the neighborhood, such as a suspected drug house or a series of burglaries. The Neighborhood Watch program can be applied to a number of different environments, such as residential streets,

apartment buildings, college campuses, parks, and business districts. Different environments may call for some differences in organization and operation due to the different crime and livability issues that may be present and the agencies that might respond to these problems.

- *Neighborhood Watch*: The umbrella term for the program, and also the term for the program when it is applied in a single-family housing setting.
- *Apartment Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch in multi-family housing.
- *Campus Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch on a college or corporate campus.
- *Park Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch consisting of neighbors of a park who are focused on preventing crime at the park.
- *Business Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch in a business district, consisting of businesses.

Starting a Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watches begin with a meeting at which the Crime Prevention Coordinator (CPC) provides the training and materials you need to get started. Below are the steps to take to set up this initial meeting.

1. Talk to your CPPC

Contact the CPC for your neighborhood to tell him or her that you are interested in starting a Neighborhood Watch. Ask any questions you have about how to proceed. Phone numbers for CPCs are at the end of this information sheet.

2. Ask a neighbor or two to help you

If you already know some of your neighbors, recruit one or two of them to help you get your Neighborhood Watch up and running.

3. Find out about your neighbors' concerns

Talk with your neighbors, asking them about their crime concerns and about any other block issues they may have. They might provide you with information about suspicious activity on your block at this time. Also ask them about days of the week that would work for them to attend a meeting.

4. Decide what area you are going to organize

At the minimum, invite the neighbors who have a fairly direct view of each other's houses or apartments. For a standard city block this might include both sides of the street, corner houses that look down your block and backyard neighbors where applicable. It is a good idea to start with your own block, then recruit people on surrounding blocks to organize their own blocks. If you are organizing within an apartment complex, invite at least all of the people in your building, and decide if you want to invite the people in adjacent buildings as well.

5. Decide the time, date, and location of the first meeting

Usually Neighborhood Watch trainings are held on weekday evenings, and start around 6:30 - 7:00 p.m. Often meetings are held on your block in someone's home. Choose a meeting space that comfortably accommodates the neighbors you have invited. The initial meeting takes about two hours.



6. Ask your CPC to put the training date on his/her calendar

Contact the CPC two to three weeks in advance of your proposed meeting to ensure that he or she has this date and time available. Let him/her know the location of the meeting, the number of households expected and any concerns that your neighbors might have shared with you.

7. Deliver invitations to your neighbors

Use written invitations to invite your neighbors. Distribute the invitations at least a week or two before the meeting. Try to make personal contact with every neighbor as well. This will increase the turnout to the meeting.

Although full block participation is ideal, there are times when a household on the block is suspected of engaging in illegal activity. If the participation of that household makes others reluctant to participate, it is not necessary to include that household.

8. Recruit neighbors to help with the meeting

They may volunteer to help with refreshments, bring extra folding chairs, escort seniors to the meeting and assist you with contacting other neighbors and organizing the Neighborhood Watch.

9. Confirm and remind

On the day of the meeting confirm the time and place with your CPPC. Have several block members help you remind the neighbors of the meeting to maximize turnout.

Outline of the Neighborhood Watch training

At your training, your CPC will train your group in the following topics and give you the assistance and materials you need to start your group.

- Purpose of Neighborhood Watch
- Discussion of any crime issues of particular interest to group
- Organizing your Neighborhood Watch
- Roles within a Neighborhood Watch
- How to use Neighborhood Watch tools: block profile questionnaire, block profile form, block map, telephone tree
- Neighborhood Watch signs
- Recognizing and reporting suspicious activity
- 9-1-1 vs. non-emergency number
- Other resources for neighborhood problems
- Describing suspects and vehicles in a way that police can use the information
- Documenting suspicious and criminal activity
- How to improve the security of your home (inside and out) and the security of your vehicle
- Scenarios- how to deal with certain types of situations
- Maintaining your Neighborhood Watch in the long term
- Discussion and signing of volunteer agreements
- Selection of watch organizer
- Q & A



Follow up training and meetings

An active Neighborhood Watch often has members join after the initial training that happens when the watch forms. The Crime Prevention Coordinator (CPC) will be happy to train new members of the Neighborhood Watch and do refresher trainings for people who are already members. When a Neighborhood Watch is experienced and established, the Neighborhood Watch organizer may do these trainings. The CPC can provide the Neighborhood Watch organizer with materials to conduct the training.

It's a good idea for active Neighborhood Watches to set up regular meetings for members to discuss what they are seeing in their neighborhood. At a minimum, the group should meet annually. Many groups find it is more effective to meet more often. The CPC or a police officer may be able to attend some of these meetings. Meetings are a good time to discuss how more members might be recruited, or any procedural decisions that need to be made. They are also a good time to have a short training on a topic of interest to members of your Neighborhood Watch that would help them better understand trends in crime and livability problems in their neighborhood. For example, additional training in homeless issues, gang activity, or domestic violence may be helpful. Talk to your CPC about additional training you would like to have. He or she may be able to provide the training, or help you find a trainer on the topic.

El Programa de la Prevención del Crimen tiene un miembro que habla español. Llame por favor al número principal 503-823-4000 si usted necesita los servicios en español.

The full Neighborhood Watch manual is available on the Office of Neighborhood Involvement website at www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp. The manual contains more details about the tools and procedures of Neighborhood Watch.

Crime Prevention Program Numbers

All numbers are area code 503

Main Line	823-4064
Central Precinct area.....	823-5852, 823-4257, 823-0540
East Precinct area	823-3432, 823-5532, 823-3505
North Precinct area.....	823-4098, 823-4094, 823-4764
Neighborhood Watch and Foot Patrol	823-2781
Enhanced Safety Properties.....	823-4763
Training and Education.....	823-3131
Program Manager.....	823-2030

Related services

Liquor license notification	823-4520
Graffiti abatement	823-4824
Noise control.....	823-7350
Code enforcement hotline (<i>nuisances, zoning, etc.</i>)	823-2633
City/County information & referral	823-4000
Neighborhood mediation	595-4890