

## **What Is Neighborhood Watch?**

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that enlists the active participation of residents in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime, solve problems, and improve the quality of life in your area. In it you will get to know and work with your neighbors, and learn how to:

- Recognize and report crimes and suspicious activities,
- Protect yourself, your family, and your property,
- Protect your neighbor's family and property, and
- Identify crime and disorder problems in your area and work with Troutdale Police personnel to solve them.

## **How to Start and Maintain a Neighborhood Watch Program**

The following steps explain how to get a Neighborhood Watch program started and maintained in your area:

**Talk to your neighbors.** See if there's interest in forming a Neighborhood Watch group in your area. If there is contact the Troutdale Police Department for help.

**Talk to the Troutdale Police Department.** Call us and ask to talk to a Patrol Sergeant for more information. A Patrol Sergeant will suggest how you should proceed and discuss the crime and disorder problems that you will have to deal with.

**Talk to your neighbors again.** Tell them about the benefits of a program and the problems to be addressed. Ask about convenient times and places for the first meeting. Be sure to mention that Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings or personal risks, and that a Troutdale Police Officer will be invited to the first meeting to answer questions.

**Planning the first meeting.** Select a date, time, and place for the first meeting. Invite the Troutdale Police Officer. Meetings are usually held at a home, school, church, or community center. Send out meeting announcements a few weeks ahead of the date. You can distribute fliers, make phone calls, or send emails. Send out reminders a few days before the meeting.

Prepare an agenda and sign-in sheet for the first meeting. Ask the Troutdale Police Officer assigned to your Neighborhood Watch project to talk about the crime and disorder problems in your area, how to get crime information on the Internet, and how the partnership with the Police department will work.

Ask the Officer to bring copies of any pamphlets on personal and home security, vehicle security, preventing fraud and identity theft, reporting crimes and suspicious activities, and reporting disorder and other problems. Other information that might be available are calls for service, crime information, how to deal with homeless people, senior safety and security, vacation safety and security, and preventing robberies, burglaries, and other crimes against

businesses. The meeting should last about one hour and the agenda should allow time for questions, answers, and other topics.

**First meeting.** The first meeting is critical in forming of a group. All attendees should introduce themselves and sign a sheet with their names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses so they can be contacted about future meetings and activities. They should be assured that their personal information will not be given to anyone without their permission. The Officer will talk about the topics listed above and answer questions. Then the group should define the area to be covered and select a Block Captain or Co-Captains.

The area covered by a group in a neighborhood with single-family homes can range from several homes on one side of a street to several blocks with homes on both sides of the streets. The area can also include neighborhood parks, etc. The area covered in a neighborhood with apartment complexes can range from a single complex to several complexes. The area need not be an entire block. Or it could include several blocks.

The initial duties of the Block Captain or Co-Captains are listed below:

- Compile a membership list
- Develop an area map with home addresses
- Proceed with the City process for installing and maintaining the Neighborhood Watch signs, and post.

Neighborhood Watch signs are provided by the department upon completion and formation of a Neighborhood Watch group. For information pertaining to the sign and Public Works approval and guidelines for placement of the sign, click [HERE](#).

**Continuing duties of the Block Captain or Co-Captains.** After the group is formed their duties will depend on their organizational skills and interests, and the nature and objectives of the group. The following are some possibilities:

- Recruit new members
- Maintain a membership list and area map with home addresses
- Keep members informed about area crime and disorder
- Try to see group members frequently
- Establish and maintain a phone tree with home and work numbers that group members can use to contact residents in an emergency
- Develop an area activity profile to help members recognize unusual or suspicious activities in the area. This could include vehicle descriptions, work hours, school hours for children, and scheduled services, e.g., gardening
- Act as a spokesperson for the group
- Serve as liaison with the Troutdale Police Department
- Plan, announce, and facilitate meetings
- Organize crime prevention activities, e.g., watching homes when residents are away

**Subsequent Meetings and Activities.** Meetings of the whole group should be held at least once a year. They can be held more often if there is information to be distributed and discussed, a problem to address, or a special event to be planned and held. The key to keeping a Neighborhood Watch group active is maintaining interest over time and communicating with members.

Meetings can be scheduled to discuss specific crime prevention or other topics. The Troutdale Police department can also provide officers to talk on domestic violence, workplace violence, gangs, child and adult abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, identity theft, landlord/tenant relations, bike safety, homeland security, etc.

Meetings can also be scheduled to address a serious incident in the area, or two or more less-serious incidents of the same type. Problem solving usually proceeds in the following steps:

Special events are another good way to keep the group active. The following are some possibilities:

- Neighborhood walks to identify potential crime and disorder problems
- Socials, e.g., parties or potluck dinners
- Cleaning streets, vacant lots, parks, etc.
- Graffiti paint outs
- Bicycle safety and licensing rodeo