

Dallas Homeowners League

**Brief on a Neighborhood Watch
For
Neighborhood Associations**

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Neighborhood Watch Overview

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.

Launched in 1972, and sponsored by the [National Sheriffs' Association](#), 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 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.

Essentially, Neighborhood Watch is a group of neighbors looking out for neighbors. It is getting to know each other and becoming familiar with your neighbor's habits and vehicles so that you will know when something is suspicious or out of the ordinary. In addition to recognizing potential suspicious activities, Neighborhood Watch participants report such activity by calling 911. After calling 911, neighbors should also notify your Watch Chairperson.

Neighborhood Watch does NOT mean being a vigilante. Participants do not confront suspects or take any personal risks at all. Nor does the program make you a nosy neighbor - it makes you a good neighbor in the old-fashioned sense of the word.

Neighborhood Watch Considerations

Starting a Neighborhood Watch program in your neighborhood is not hard, but it will take a little time and some proper planning.

A. Step One: Getting started

- Visit the www.nnw.org/usaonwatch website which is the national face of the Neighborhood Watch program. There you will find great information to help you get started.
- Determine the area you want to organize. This should be the area you consider your "neighborhood". Groups can range in size from 5 to 150 households. The larger the area, the greater the protection.
- Find neighbors to assist you. These people will form your initial group of Neighborhood Watch Volunteers. A good number would be one person per 8 to 10 households. Determine the best night of the week for a presentation. Most Neighborhood Watch presentations are held during the evening hours, Fridays and weekends are not recommended.
- Set up a free neighborhood watch website to help coordinate and communicate your efforts. Go to this link to set up a free website http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/article/Community/Free_Neighborhood_Watch_Websites.

B. Step Two: Contact the Sheriff's Office to schedule speakers

- Contact Your Local Sheriff's Office or the Dallas Police Department
- Arrange a meeting location close to your neighborhood. It should have enough room to hold your invited neighbors and, if needed, for the use of audio visual aids such as an overhead projector.

C. Step Three: Invite your neighbors

- Distribute the invitations at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting. The most effective way to do this is to ask the Neighborhood Watch volunteers to hand-carry them to neighbors and ask if they will attend. Get names and phone numbers if possible to make reminder calls later.
- Distribute a meeting "reminder" notice 3 days before the meeting or make personal phone calls.

D. Step Four: Prepare a neighborhood map

- Prepare a Neighborhood Watch area map or plat plan showing names, phone numbers and street number of each household.

E. Step Five: The presentation

At the presentation you will:

- Identify concerns and develop an action plan.

- Learn crime prevention techniques such as home security, personal safety and Operation Identification.
- Learn how to report suspicious activity.
- Meet your neighbors and establish a communication network (telephone tree).
- Recruit your Coordinator and Block Captains.
- You will learn how to order Neighborhood Watch signs.

F. Step Six: Maintenance

Once your neighborhood has been organized, maintaining interest in Neighborhood Watch is important. It's too easy for us to forget to keep that vigilance we thought was so important in the beginning. Some groups maintain interest by planning neighborhood outings, meetings, summer picnics and passing out a Neighborhood Watch Newsletter every month.