

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

“EYES AND EARS” FOR NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

Neighborhood Watch, Block Watch, Town Watch, Building Watch, Crime Watch ----

Whatever the name, it's one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime and reduce fear. Neighborhood Watch fights the isolation that crime creates and feeds upon. It forges bonds among residents, helps reduce burglaries and robberies and improves relations between police and the communities they serve.

WHY NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?

It works! Throughout the country, dramatic decreases in burglary and related offenses are reported by law enforcement professionals in communities with active Watch programs.

Today's transient society creates communities that are less personal. Many families have two working parents and children involved in many activities that keep them away from home. An empty house in a neighborhood where none of the neighbors know the owner is a prime target for burglary.



Neighborhood Watch also helps build pride and serves as a springboard for efforts that address other community concerns such as recreation for youth, child care and affordable housing.

WHAT DOES A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH DO?

A Neighborhood Watch is neighbors helping neighbors. The neighborhood members become extra eyes and ears for reporting crime and helping one another. Members meet their neighbors, learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the Longmont Police Department.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF A WATCH PROGRAM?

Community meetings

These should be set up on a regular basis such as bi-monthly, monthly or quarterly.

Citizen or community patrol

A citizen's patrol is made up of volunteers who walk or drive through the community and alert police to crime and questionable activities. Not all Neighborhood Watch groups need a citizen's patrol. Don't intervene – call 9-1-1.

Communications

These could include a simple weekly flier posted on a community announcement board, a newsletter that updates neighbors on the progress of the program or a neighborhood electronic bulletin board.

Special events

These are crucial to keep the program going and growing. Have block parties or other get-togethers throughout the year. Have fun!

WHO CAN START A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?

A motivated individual, a few concerned residents, a community organization or a homeowner association can spearhead the efforts to establish a Watch

- Any community resident can join – young and old, single and married, renter and home owner.
- You can form a Neighborhood Watch group around any geographical unit: a block, residential neighborhood group, apartment, building, park, business area, public housing complex or office.

GETTING ORGANIZED

Forming a Neighborhood Watch is rewarding and easy.

Here are a few tips to get your group started:

- Canvas your neighborhood for interest. Briefly explain the value of the Neighborhood Watch program. Ask about convenient times to schedule your first Neighborhood Watch meeting.
- Be sure to mention that Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings and does not ask anyone to take personal risks to prevent crime. Neighborhood Watch leaves the responsibility for apprehending criminals where it belongs – with the police department.
- Select a coordinator and, if needed, block captains who are responsible for organizing meetings and relaying information to members.
- Contact the Longmont Police Department at 303-774-4440 to set up a meeting with a Longmont Police Officer and your Neighborhood Watch group. The police department can provide information on how to train members in home security and reporting skills and for information on local crime patterns. Allow at least two weeks notice for scheduling to meet with an officer. This is a great opportunity to get to know your beat officers and get your questions answered.
- Recruit members, keep up-to-date on new residents and make special efforts to involve the elderly, working parents and young people.
- A Neighborhood Watch sign can be installed in your neighborhood after at least 90 percent of all households sign a petition for the sign. Block Captains can spearhead the collection of these signatures.

YOUR FIRST STEP – ARRANGE A DATE, TIME AND PLACE FOR THE FIRST MEETING.

- Set the meeting date far enough in advance to have time to give everyone notice. Decide who will lead the first meeting. Arrange for someone to take notes and to distribute them to the entire neighborhood.
- Select a time that is convenient for most neighbors and your beat officer.
- Develop and distribute a flyer announcing the meeting. You may want to enlist teens in your neighborhood to help distribute the flyers.
- Meet at a location as close to the neighborhood as possible. You can meet in the home of neighbor, or at other City or church facilities. Remind everyone of the meeting date two or three days before it arrives.
- Don't be disappointed if not everyone attends. One hundred percent neighborhood participation would be great but is not required for Neighborhood Watch to be successful.

HOLDING YOUR FIRST MEETING:

- Distribute name tags
- Welcome everyone and make introductions
- Discuss pertinent neighborhood news
- Decide on your next meeting date and agenda



Ask your Longmont Police Officer to cover the following topics:

- ✓ **Specific crime problems in your area**
- ✓ **Effective crime prevention techniques for home and neighborhood**
- ✓ **Types of “suspicious” behavior to watch for**
- ✓ **How to report a crime: what to look for, how to describe the individuals, vehicle or activity, and other information such as location or names, etc. that could help solve the crime.**

GATHER AND SHARE INFORMATION

Knowing more about your neighbors, their vehicles and their daily routines will help you recognize unusual or suspicious activities.

Consider exchanging the following types of basic information with your neighbors:

- Home and work phone numbers
- Number, ages and names of family members or household residents
- Work hours
- School or day care hours of children
- Who owns dogs? Cats?
- Planned vacations or visitors
- Scheduled deliveries or repairs

SPECIFICALLY WHAT TO LOOK FOR...

- Someone screaming or shouting for help
- Someone looking into windows and parked cars
- Unusual noises
- Property being taken out of closed businesses or houses where no one is at home
- Cars, vans, or trucks moving slowly with no apparent destination or without lights
- Someone being forced into a vehicle
- A stranger sitting in a car or stopping to talk to a child
- Abandoned cars

Report these types of incidents to the Longmont Police Department. Call 9-1-1 for emergencies or immediate assistance or 303-651-8555 for non-emergency help. Talk with your neighbors about the problem and ask for their assistance in watching out for suspicious activity.

HOW TO REPORT

Call 9-1-1 in an emergency or 303-651-8555 for non-emergency calls:

- Give your name and address
- Briefly describe the event - what happened, when, where and who was involved
- Describe the suspect: sex, race, age, height, weight, hair color, clothing and distinctive characteristics such as beard, mustache, scars or accent
- Describe the vehicle, if one was involved: color, make, model, year, license plate and special features such as stickers, dents or decals.

KEEPING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM ALIVE

- It's an unfortunate fact that when a neighborhood crime crisis goes away, so does enthusiasm for Neighborhood Watch. Work to keep your Neighborhood Watch group a vital force for community well-being.
- Organize regular meetings that focus on current issues such as drug abuse, violence, crime in schools, child care before and after school, recreational activities for youth, and victim services.
- Organize community patrols to walk around streets or apartment complexes and alert police to crime and suspicious activities and identify problems needing attention. Don't intervene – call 9-1-1.
- Adopt a park or school playground. Pick up litter, repair broken equipment or paint over graffiti.
- Don't forget social events that give neighbors a chance to know each other - a block party, potluck dinner, volleyball or softball game, or even a picnic. These activities are fun and help foster a close community.

Take a Stand Against Crime. Join a Neighborhood Watch!

Visit www.nationaltownwatch.org for more information about Neighborhood Watch and National Night Out (First Tuesday in August).

Adapted from The National Crime Prevention Council
<http://www.ncpc.org>