

A Checklist For Starting a Neighborhood Watch Program

You Will Need

- A person or group of people committed to starting a Neighborhood Watch.
- A planning committee to initiate the program.
- A list of what issues initially need to be addressed in your community.
- A means of communicating with the residents, e.g., e-mail, fliers, telephone trees.
- Publicity for the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting.
- A meeting agenda to keep things moving and on track.
- A place to meet — resident's house or apartment, community center, school, library.
- A crime prevention officer to discuss the crime issues in the neighborhood and to help train members.
- A map of the community with spaces for names, addresses, and phone numbers of all households.
- Brochures or other materials on topics of interest to the residents.
- A sign-up sheet for those interested in becoming block or building captains.
- Neighborhood Watch signs to be posted around the community. Some jurisdictions require a minimum number of participants before Neighborhood Watch signs can be posted.
- Facts about crime in your neighborhood. (These can be found in police reports, newspapers, and residents' perception about crime. Often residents' opinions are not supported by facts, and accurate information can reduce fear of crime.)

To Add Excitement

- Mix business with pleasure — allow attendees time to socialize.
- Seek out neighborhood go-getters — civic leaders and elected officials — to be your advocates and mentors.
- Work with such existing organizations as citizens' association, tenants' association, or housing authorities.
- Provide speakers on topics of community interest.
- Link crime prevention into activities promoted by other groups: child protection, anti-vandalism projects, community service, arson prevention, recreation activities for young people.
- Start a neighborhood newsletter.
- Arrange for McGruff to make a surprise appearance at a meeting, rally, or other event.

To Build Partnerships

- The police or sheriffs' office's endorsement is critical to a Watch group's credibility. These agencies are the major sources of information on local crime patterns, crime prevention education, and crime reporting.
- Local businesses and organizations can help provide fliers and a newsletter, offer meeting places, and distribute crime prevention information. Ask an electronics store to donate cellular phones.
- Libraries can provide research materials, videos, computers, and meeting space.
- Media can aid Neighborhood Watches by publicizing recruitment drives.
- Look to volunteer centers, parent groups, and labor unions for advice on recruiting volunteers.
- Teenagers are valuable resources. They can be an integral part of a citizens' patrol including biking and rollerblading to scout the neighborhood.
- Places of worship can provide meeting space and a good source of volunteers.