

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.
- Woodbury requires two meetings a year for a Neighborhood Watch group.
- A list of what issues initially need to be addressed in your community.
- A means of communicating with the residents: e-mail, fliers, telephone trees.
- Publicity for the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting within your area.
- 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.
- A sign-up sheet for those interested in becoming block or building captains.
- 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. This needs to be coordinated with the Woodbury Police.
- 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).
- 50% participation by your block.

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.

To Build Partnerships

- The police department's endorsement is critical to a Neighborhood 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.
- 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 citizen's patrol, including biking and rollerblading to scout the neighborhood.
- Places of worship can provide meeting space and a good source of volunteers.

Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch has been around for many years. It is the most successful crime prevention program ever developed. The Neighborhood Watch program has served with the intent to improve the overall well-being and quality of life for the entire community. It could benefit your community, if you give it a chance.

Starting Neighborhood Watch

Tell your neighbors you are starting a Neighborhood Watch Program. Explain the benefits of having a Watch program.

Determine the best night for a Neighborhood Watch meeting. Contact the Crime Prevention Unit to see if they can attend. If they can, schedule them to appear for about 30 minutes after the start of your meeting.

Have the meeting at someone's home in the neighborhood; you can combine it with a picnic or a potluck. Tell your neighbors you would appreciate their attendance at the start-up meeting.

Collect the Family Information forms prior to the meeting. Prepare a block map of your neighborhood, a block profile sheet, and a telephone tree so you can hand them out at the meeting.

Your First Meeting

Use the first meeting agenda as a guide to conduct the initial meeting. Hold the meeting to a reasonable time limit to keep interest, no more than 1-1/2 hours in length.

Discuss the Family Data Sheet and creation of a block map. Block captains will keep this information.

Keep in mind the important elements of a successful gathering, the three F's, Food, Fun and Free.

Invite the neighbors to bring their kids and arrange for older children in the neighborhood to oversee their activities during the meeting.

Think of ways to involve the youth in the Neighborhood Watch group, too many people forget them and their importance to making a neighborhood a safer and more pleasant place to live.

First Meeting Agenda

- The organizer of the meeting calls the meeting to order and thank everyone for attending.
- Have everyone attending stand and introduce themselves, where they live, what they drive, and anything else they would like to relate to the group.
- Have everyone sign the attendance Meeting Sign In sheet.
- Elect or appoint a Block Captain or Co-Captains.
- Collect the Family Information forms. If some of the attendees have not completed the forms, take a couple of minutes to allow them to do so at this time. Do not pressure anyone to fill these forms out, this is completely voluntary.
- When the police department representative arrives, turn the meeting over to them and allow them to talk with the attendees regarding their concerns about the neighborhood and the community overall. They can ask questions of either a general or specific nature, the time is theirs.
- Tell the attendees that you will complete the block map, telephone tree, and the block profile sheet, make copies, and distribute it to all of them within the next week or so.
- Thank everyone for attending.
- Adjourn the meeting.

Block Captain Responsibilities

1. The Block Captain's geographical area of responsibility for the Neighborhood Watch is usually relatively small. Small blocks are easier to manage and make it more likely that the neighbors will get acquainted. What boundaries make sense for your individual neighborhood?
2. Prepare for the Neighborhood Watch meetings.
3. Conduct the Neighborhood Watch meetings.
4. Complete and distribute a block map, telephone tree, and block profile sheet.