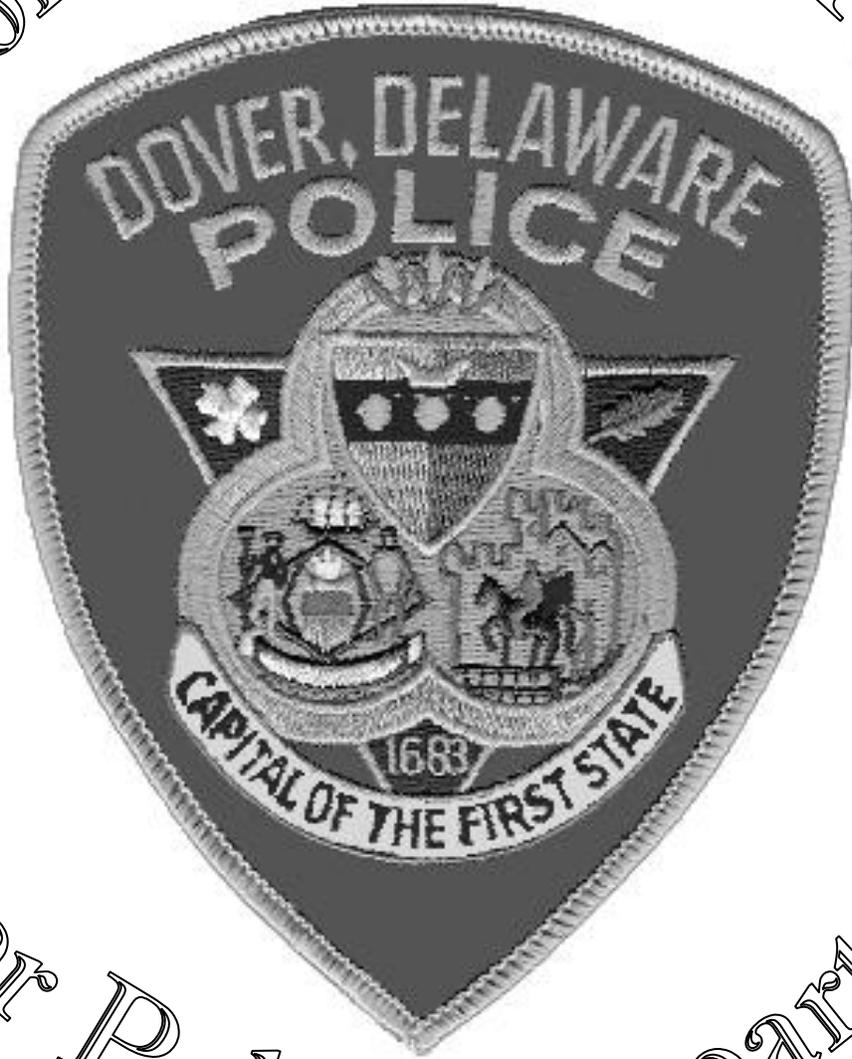


Neighborhood Watch Program



Dover Police Department

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## What is Neighborhood Watch?

The Neighborhood Watch Program is organized to enable the Dover Police Department and the community to work together in making a geographical area resistant to crime. It is citizen involvement, neighborhood and community-based efforts, designed to help citizens and the police department in preventing crime. In harmony with the Community Policing philosophy, Neighborhood watch encourages strong working relationships between police officers and the citizens they serve.

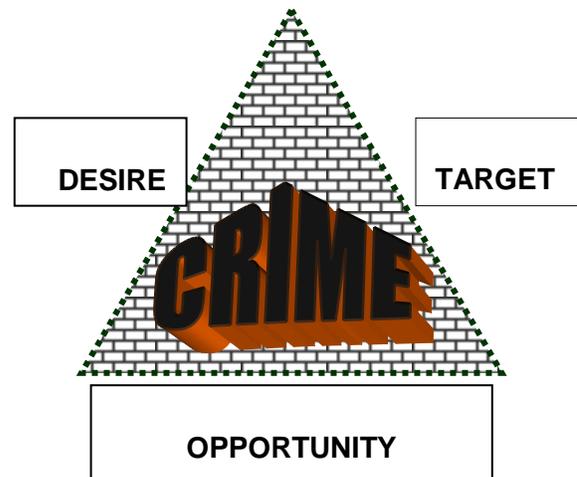
Neighborhood Watch, Crime Watch, Block Watch, Town Watch,- whatever the title, is one of most effective and least costly methods to prevent crime and reduce fear. The Watch idea can be adaptable to various geographical units such as Dormitory Watches, Realtor Watches, Apartment Watches (C.F.M.H.P.) and Business Watches.

The Dover Police Department has learned that community participation in anti-crime programs is essential. One of the most effective ways to promote citizen interaction with police is the sharing of information. Citizen groups determine specific needs or problems and then share this information with the police department. The police then act on this information and report back to the Watch Group. This program also works when the police go to the Watch group and make them aware of specific criminal activities, or the needs of the police department.

## Why is there a need to organize a Watch program?

Crime and the fear of crime threaten our community's well-being. Crime may be right there scaring everyone off the streets, or just looming on the horizon. People become afraid to leave their homes, to use streets and parks or to walk through the neighborhood. Suspicion erupts between everyone. Crime in turn feeds on the social isolation it creates. Today's lifestyles (both parents work, single parent homes,) can contribute to this isolation and weaken communities. Crime increases, and also contributes to this fear.

## There are three necessary elements to any crime



If you eliminate just one of these elements you can avert a crime. The neighborhood watch program is effective because it addresses all of these elements. To eliminate the TARGET, we teach how to target harden. To eliminate OPPORTUNITY, we train residents to be the eyes and ears of the community. To eliminate DESIRE, a concerted effort is made to make your community an undesirable place for a criminal.

As you can see there is a true need for an active organized Neighborhood Watch program in your neighborhood. Residents can reduce crime and in the process, build your community into a safer, friendlier, and more caring place to live. Whatever your neighborhood is like, getting together to fight crime can create a community where neighbors can be neighborly and people once isolated by crime and fear, can enjoy being a part of a thriving neighborhood.

## **The Goals of the Neighborhood Watch Program Are:**

- (1) To increase community awareness, enhance individuals' power of observation, and to encourage mutual assistance and concern among neighbors to reduce crime. Any crime that is prevalent to your neighborhood is targeted. Your watch group can obtain information from the Dover Police Department and other government agencies that can help improve your living conditions.
- (2) To allow the concerns of your neighborhood to be presented in a unified voice to both the Dover Police Department and to other government agencies. Your watch group can inform community leaders (such as city counsel, mayor and state representatives) on programs and actions that the "people" support.
- (3) To develop a neighborhood action program where neighbors help each other by watching each other's home and reporting suspicious activity to the Dover Police Department. You will allow the police department to train you on how to be proactive by preventing crime and how to recognize and report crime to your neighbors and the police department. The result will be criminals finding it much harder to work unnoticed in your area.
- (4) To train citizens in various personal and physical security strategies and help them in making your home more secure. Most crimes are opportunistic and can be reduced or removed by simple crime prevention techniques. It provides the police a method to give the community information on home and personal security.
- (5) Not only used as a strong tool to fight crime but also as a strong social organization. They can also be utilized to engage citizens in other neighborhood projects.

## How To Start A Neighborhood Watch Program

- (1) Find out the interest level in your neighborhood.
  - survey your neighbors
- (2) Obtain a map and clearly define the boundaries for your Watch.
  - start small and expand as you become more organized
- (3) Form a small planning committee.
  - discuss the needs, the level of interest, possible challenges and the watch idea
- (4) Schedule your initial watch meeting
  - the first meeting is basically a social event
  - select a location as close as possible to your area  
(Dover Police Department's Public Assembly room is available)
  - advertise (go door to door with handouts that announce the date, time, location and topic of the meeting)
  - invite your community policing officer from the Dover Police Department @ (302) 736-7117 (ask the officer for a summary of local criminal activity)
  - take this opportunity to get acquainted.
  - exchange phone numbers
  - discuss the Watch Program with the group
- (5) Schedule a subsequent meeting
  - at this meeting you will need to select a Neighborhood Watch Coordinator and Block Captains (for a certain number of homes i.e., every ten homes)

- (6) The Coordinator should call a meeting with the Block Captains
  - plan which form you will need to register the members
  - establish a target date to officially start the Neighborhood Watch.
- (7) Block Captains should
  - attempt to register every home in your assigned block.
  - compile a master list of all members
  - prepare a neighborhood map showing names, addresses and phone numbers of participating households and distribute to members
  - keep this list updated and contact newcomers
- (8) Establish a regular means of communication with Watch members—e.g., newsletter, telephone tree, e-mail, fax, etc. (share all kinds of news to quash rumors)
- (9) In subsequent meeting your Community Policing Officer will talk to you about crime prevention, personal safety, home security and reporting strategies. The officer will also give information on local crime trends/patterns.
- (10) Gather facts about crimes in your neighborhood.
  - Read the newspapers and stay abreast of what is occurring in your neighborhood
  - Do victimization surveys
  - Learn residents' perception about crime (often facts do not support residents' opinions, and accurate information can reduce fear of crime).
  - Continue to work with the police for long-range solutions to the identified problems. When your group has shown a true interest (usually six months of continued interest and involvement or at

least 50 percent of all households enrolled), your community policing officer will have Neighborhood Watch signs erected.

- The continued interest and involvement of your neighbors are crucial to the success of your Neighborhood Watch. Typically, Neighborhood Watch groups organize to respond to an immediate threat -- a series of rapes, a sharp increase in burglaries or a general rise in crime statistics. It is an unfortunate fact that when a neighborhood crime crisis goes away, in many situations so does enthusiasm for Neighborhood Watch. To maintain the interest of your group and give neighbors a chance to know each other, consider the following social activities.

- Block Parties
- Picnic
- Neighborhood Potluck Dinner
- Sporting events
- Progressive Dinner
- Pool Party
- House Warming



## **Organization of a Neighborhood Watch Group**

### **The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator's responsibilities may include:**

1. Act as liaison to the police department: The Coordinator passes non-emergency information from the group directly to the Community Policing Officer. The Coordinator also receives information from the Community Policing Officer and passes it to the Block Captains.
2. Coordinates the activities of Block Captains and Block Watchers participating in the program.
3. Organizing the date, time, and location for group meeting.
4. Gather and Review information on suspected criminal activities received from Block Captains then pass on finding to the police.

### **Block Captain responsibilities may include:**

1. Meet with residents in your assigned area and offer to register them in the group.
2. Hold regular meetings with the area members -- explain the program to the members and recruit non-members, stress the importance of reporting crime.
3. Cooperate and help the Coordinator.
4. Maintain an emergency phone list of all your assigned residents.
5. Be available to pass on information about criminal activities to the police, watch members and/or Coordinator.
6. Activate the phone tree if you receive information on a suspect in your area (the "phone tree" involves calling members and informing them if an active incident is going on in the area).
7. Distribute the Neighborhood Watch pamphlets and other crime prevention literature.

**Neighborhood Watch Members responsibilities may include:**

1. Attend a presentaiion on Neighborhood Watch by either the Community Policing Officer or a trained Coordinator, thus promising to report crime.
2. Cooperate and assist the Block Captain.
3. Volunteer with your area Neighborhood Watch.
4. Review the Neighborhood Watch pamphlets and crime prevention literature.
5. Take simple crime prevention measures to avoid unnecessary crimes. Target harden your home and car by using these proven techniques.
6. Participate in Operation Identification.
7. Become familiar with your neighbors, their cars, etc., you will become more observant about what is “normal” for your neighborhood.
8. Report suspicious activity (736-7111) or emergencies (911) to the police and then your Block Captian.

**THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IS NOT ABOUT TAKING POLICE ACTION!!!**

that is the job for law enforcement. It is about being a good neighbor.

9. A few examples of suspicious activities are:
  - a person running, especially if carrying something
  - person making a quick change of vehicles
  - someone looking into windows of homes or parked cars or unusual noises
  - slow moving vehicle without lights with no apparent destination.
10. Some examples of emergency situations:
  - someone screaming or shouting
  - someone in need of medical attention

- someone being forced into a vehicle
  - in progress burglaries, robberies, theft, auto break-ins, etc.
  - apparent drug trafficking
11. Report non emergency activities to your Block Captain by phone or on a 3x5 card. These will be non criminal activities.
- They may include but not limited to the following examples:
- abandoned cars
  - excessive trash/graffiti
  - overgrown lots
12. Be willing to serve as an acting Block Captain in the absence of the your regular Block Captain.
13. Attend monthly or quarterly meetings of the Watch group.

**Community Policing Officer responsibilities may include:**

1. Establish participation requirements for the program
  - Minimum of 50% active participation by the members; or
  - Minimum of at least six months of active participation by the membership of the Watch.
  - These requirements will determine if signs will be posted in your neighborhood declaring your neighborhood as an Official Neighborhood Watch Community.
2. Provide the Coordinator with operation ID engravers.
3. Will attend Watch meetings and train members on how the Neighborhood Watch program works. This will include training on Crime Prevention, Personal Safety, Community Policing, Operation ID, Home Security and Crime Reporting Procedures. These will all come together to aid and benefit your neighborhood as an overall package.

4. Provide information on local crime trends to the Coordinator.
5. Maintain records such as, phone tree, membership listing , news letters and minutes of previous meetings.

# **Neighborhood Watch Programs**

**Definitely  
Make A Difference**

## **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 communication 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 home, community center, school, library.
- ❑ A community policing officer to discuss the crime issues and to help train members.
- ❑ A map of the community with spaces for names, addresses, and phone numbers of all households.
- ❑ Brochures or other material 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 (50% active participation by members or 6 months active participation of the Watch)
- ❑ Facts about crime in your neighborhood, (found in newspaper, direct police contact and resident witness. Accurate information will control the rumor mill and 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, personal safety, bicycle safety, holiday/vacation safety, 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 Dover Police Department's endorsement is critical to a Watch group's credibility. They are the major source of information on local crime patterns, crime prevention education.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Places of worship can provide meeting space and a good source of volunteers.