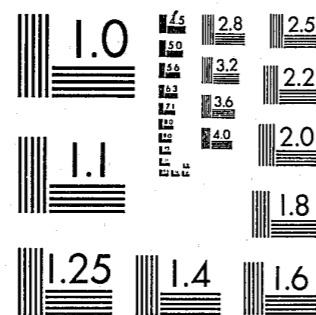


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# Program Guide

## New York Neighborhood Watch

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To The Citizens of New York State:

The safety and security of New York State residents has long been a concern of the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Through the Bureau for Municipal Police and Office of Crime Prevention, this Neighborhood Watch program guide has been developed to answer this problem.

Neighborhood Watch has established itself across the nation as one of the most effective crime prevention programs available. Herein you will find an explanation of the program, how it works, and can best be implemented. The guide is the product of many hours of research and preparation which we believe will serve the residents of New York State well.

Welcome to the program.

Sincerely,

*Frank J. Rogers*  
Frank J. Rogers

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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## NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Our way of life has changed considerably since the days when neighborhoods were the center of social activity, and every family knew every other family on the block. Today, people move from one part of the country to another with increasing frequency, and families prefer the privacy of fenced backyards or closed apartment doors. People often do not know the family two doors down the street, or two flights upstairs. The friendly security built into old neighborhoods has disappeared.

In an effort to restore neighborhood safety and security, the National Sheriffs' Association launched a Neighborhood Watch program in 1972. Burglary was chosen as the target crime because of its prevalence -- New York State has more than one burglary every two minutes -- and because police can combat burglary effectively with public cooperation.

Most people say local police do a good job, but still feel that more should be done to reduce crime. Despite this public attitude, more than half of all household burglaries are never even reported to police.

Many citizens realize they need police to protect them, but obviously police cannot fight crime they don't know about. When police are alerted quickly to suspicious circumstances, they are more effective against crime, and citizens benefit from improved protection and safer neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Watch, which gets police and citizens working together for neighborhood safety, is a self-help anti-crime program. Residents make a community effort, in cooperation with their law enforcement agencies, to protect each other and their property. Local law enforcement personnel show citizens how to report crimes or suspicious persons to police. Residents of a community know, better than area patrol officers, who belongs in the neighborhood and who doesn't. They accept deliveries, mow lawns, shovel snow, and pick up mail and newspapers while neighbors are away, to give their homes a "lived-in" look. Neighbors help neighbors, turning streets and apartment complexes into communities again. Citizens take the initiative for their own safety.

Neighborhood Watch does not require that people reveal family secrets. It offers attentive concern without loss of privacy. It is not snooping; it is not binocular-wielding busybodies; it is not vigilante groups. One person is not responsible for an entire apartment complex or block of houses. It costs members no money.

The program is built on cooperation and reciprocity on a small scale, multiplied many times as more and more groups of neighbors participate. People help each other for the protection of their neighborhood. They watch only the homes or apartments immediately around them. Police and neighbors agree that each group needs the other to ensure safe places to live. Police need timely information, neighbors need trained law enforcement -- and Neighborhood Watch builds a two-way bridge between them.

### Getting Started

When a local police department or a citizens' group decides to start a Neighborhood Watch program, community support and cooperation are essential.

The police chief or sheriff should make an organized presentation of the program to the city council or town board to inform elected officials about the program and to enlist their support. Similar presentations may be made to local civic, social and church groups, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, senior citizen centers, Parent-Teacher Associations, Kiwanis Clubs, and similar service organizations. Although central leadership and guidance are provided by the law enforcement agency, ongoing administrative details rest with neighborhood groups or block associations, which must handle the bulk of this workload if the program is to succeed.

Residents should be informed of the program by mail, phone, radio announcements, crime prevention displays, talk shows, or any combination of such methods. The public needs to be made aware that the program is available for their neighborhood without charge or commercial affiliation. To encourage resident participation, promotional materials should be distributed. These can be supplied by the State Office of Crime Prevention, or prepared by the local law enforcement agency or interested community organization. The materials should describe the program's general intent and activities, and may be backed up by posters in neighborhood stores, churches, etc. It should be noted that locally prepared promotional materials can address issues of particular interest to an area, such as auto theft, vandalism, burglary, door-to-door fraud, or arson.

After a community has been made aware of the program, residents should be invited to attend a block or apartment meeting in someone's home. A neighbor's home is recommended for the meeting because it is more informal and personal than a meeting hall, and has the necessary props for a demonstration of residential security measures. Also, using a neighbor's home helps limit the size of the group.

The law enforcement representative should chair the initial meeting, explain the program, and help with selection of a block captain. The officer should be prepared for many unrelated questions and complaints. For many citizens, this may be their first opportunity ever to express their opinion of their police department. The officer can expect complaints about "unfair" parking tickets, for instance, and should be prepared to address neighbors' concerns while gracefully keeping the meeting on track. The officer should remember that police usually meet the public in adversary or crisis situations; this first Neighborhood Watch meeting will be breaking ground on a new type of relationship between police and public. The officer should make every effort to lay the groundwork for future cooperation.

Before the meeting, the officer should obtain and review statistics on crime in the neighborhood. If people at the meeting argue that the police department figures do not represent the true nature or dimensions of their crime problem, the officer should point out that under-reporting may be part of the difficulty. This would demonstrate all the more clearly the need for a Neighborhood Watch program. In any case, the group's perception of their crime problems must be dealt with as part of launching the program.

As more and more block groups hold such initial meetings, they should be encouraged to cluster and form neighborhood-level groups. Subsequent meetings can then be held on a neighborhood-wide scale, with information disseminated accordingly.

### Program Management

Besides the sheriff or police chief, the program should enlist community leaders as organizers and permanent chairpersons. Such leaders need not be celebrities, politicians, or business executives. It is more important that they be respected, well-known members of the community who are able to recruit volunteers through their charisma and reputation. They must be willing to work hard organizing the program, not simply to lend their names as endorsement. It is their responsibility to organize initial meetings, promote the program in daily contacts with neighbors, and encourage residents to participate.

It must be stressed that both groups, the law enforcement agency and the Neighborhood Watch organization, have separate functions. The law enforcement agency's function is that of a guide and support to the Neighborhood Watch organization.

The law enforcement agency should:

1. Act as initial organizer, or as consultant to a self-started community group.
2. Attend meetings (preferably the area's patrol officers) and work with groups. Explain how law enforcement agencies react and respond to phone calls reporting possible crimes.
3. Train Neighborhood Watch groups in general crime prevention: home, business and personal security; security surveys; Operation I.D.; frauds and con games; how to report a crime; what to do if they find themselves victims of a crime. Obviously, such training should be given over a period of time, not all at one meeting.
4. Help maintain group motivation by introducing new subject areas for action, if interest begins to lag.
5. Check tendencies toward vigilante action. Stress constantly that group members should always call police in suspicious circumstances, and must not take action themselves. Not only does vigilante action expose individuals to risk of injury, but without official guidance an individual or organization may unknowingly be guilty of breaking the law.
6. Collect and maintain crime data so groups can pinpoint problem areas, and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

Neighborhood Watch members should:

1. Report suspicious persons or activities.
2. Accept deliveries for vacationing neighbors.

3. Keep keys for neighbors.
4. Watch nearby houses or apartments.
5. Pick up mail, newspapers and advertising circulars.
6. House-sit for neighbors who have funerals or weddings in the family. Burglars often find easy victims just by reading newspapers.
7. Mow lawns, shovel snow, or turn lights on and off to give empty houses a lived-in look.

The functions of both groups should be made clear at the initial meeting, and some type of organizational structure should be set up. The neighborhood group should select volunteer "block watchers," people who are in the apartment building or neighborhood most of the time. Non-working persons, senior citizens, and homemakers are likely candidates. They should be level-headed people, well trained to react when a need arises. The police officer and the chairperson of the community program should work with block watchers on problems peculiar to that block, and in organizing block participation or activities, but law enforcement personnel should remember that these are community-based programs run by residents. Neighborhood people are responsible for meetings, recruiting, and distributing information. Some may wish to start their own newsletters. The law enforcement agency's functions are to guide the program, attend meetings, and supply training and materials.

#### Possible Problems

One frequent problem is that people sometimes hesitate to become involved. They value privacy. Often they fear retaliation. One way to overcome this problem is to assign numbers to block watchers. When watchers call police, numbers are used instead of names, with both being maintained in a confidential master file. Police contact the caller by phone for further information if necessary. They refrain from appearing at the caller's home or place of employment.

To assure complete privacy, a tip line may be used. This is a phone answered by a machine, by a police department employee, or by a combination of both. The system registers anonymous tips, and encourages crime reporting, but offers little or no means of reestablishing contact with the tipster.

Continued enthusiasm of members is needed to keep a program functioning smoothly. This requires gaining encouragement and support from police officials and office holders, informing members when their calls lead to arrests, and keeping in contact with every interested citizen. Members should be kept active and should feel they are accomplishing something.

To keep enthusiasm high, meetings should not be called unless there are specific tasks to be accomplished or information to be given. Law enforcement officers should meet with one neighborhood group at a time, and deal with its specific problems. Meetings should be orderly, structured, and brief. Officers should keep lines of communication open,

and should express appreciation openly to those who work hard. Introducing new programs occasionally, such as Operation I.D., security surveys, and block parties, keeps interest high. Social activities (block parties, field days, holiday gatherings) can heighten group cohesiveness. It may be desired to train block captains in new programs, and have them introduce the programs to members. Eventually, groups can develop multi-issue programs, such as fire watch and medical emergency watch, which really are variations of the original Neighborhood Watch program.

Funding should not be a problem. Neighborhood Watch materials are provided by the New York State Office of Crime Prevention. If a group needs money for stationery, supplies, postage, or refreshments, community events like raffles, bake sales, or yard (garage) sales can be held. Block parties are effective if members bring their own specialties. Merchants can be approached for donations; their contributions should be publicized and they should be thanked publicly at the block party or the next meeting. However, it must be emphasized that Neighborhood Watch endorses no products. It is a community program, dependent on citizen participation and cooperation. It is essential to make everyone involved feel that even the smallest contribution toward the program helps ensure its success.

#### Evaluation: Measuring Results

Evaluation is any effort to measure the effects of your endeavors. It can be as uncomplicated as a casual review of the past year's activities, or as sophisticated as a 100-page report with flow charts, demographic studies and performance tables. The depth of an evaluation must be decided on an individual basis by the program manager, but every program should be evaluated.

Some individuals may question the need for evaluation of a Neighborhood Watch program, feeling that the program should be maintained on an informal basis by the police department or neighborhood group. However, it is human nature to want to be assured that what you are doing is worthwhile, and is having some positive effect upon crime in the specific area.

Above and beyond this, evaluation has a functional value, as well. The evaluation process is an aid to the administration of the program, in at least three ways.

First, it can serve as an accurate gauge of success or failure on a continuing basis. This permits modifying the program while it is running, rather than waiting until the end of the year only to find that efforts have been misdirected.

Second, evaluation provides an often neglected management function: building member motivation and incentive. Participants who are well informed of the results of their efforts are more likely to maintain a higher level of enthusiasm. Lack of enthusiasm has been the undoing of many crime prevention programs, and any measures that can encourage members should be actively pursued.

Third, evaluation has value in any program that receives supportive funds. Today more than ever, public and private funding organizations want to see definite results from their investments. In such cases, evaluation is not a nicety but a necessity. Program managers must allocate time to

this task if they wish to receive the necessary monies to continue or expand their programs.

Evaluation of individual programs is a matter of judgment, but some measures that help gauge the success of a program are:

1. The number of persons or neighborhood groups involved.
2. The number of presentations requested or given, the subject areas, the number of people attending, and the feedback from these presentations.
3. The number of burglary-in-progress and suspicious-person calls, compared with the number for the same period the year before. Remember that what appears to be an increased burglary rate may represent increased reporting of crime by alert residents involved in the program.
4. The quantity of literature distributed.
5. The dollar value of donated broadcast time or press space.
6. Any new programs that have arisen from the original effort.
7. Possible attitude surveys geared toward measuring changes in police-community relations. Volunteers (perhaps students or retirees) could help here.
8. Endorsements or involvements by community leaders and/or civic groups.

These measures represent some of the record-keeping necessary for successful program management. They are vital if private or government funding is involved. The Office of Crime Prevention will require help from participating law enforcement agencies and communities in demonstrating that state funds were well spent.

Record-keeping (for evaluation or any other purpose) should never be put off until the last minute. Collecting necessary information from the beginning and keeping it up to date will avoid confusion when the information is needed in a hurry. More importantly, it will show members they really are accomplishing something. If there are problem areas where the group should be exerting more effort, documentation will be available to prove the point.

#### Precautions

Unfortunately, people sometimes try to capitalize fraudulently on a program. Members should be issued Neighborhood Watch I.D. cards signed or stamped by the local law enforcement representative. They should be warned about fraud, and kept abreast of any fraudulent activity. It

should be emphasized that participation costs nothing and the program endorses no products.

Calls on neighbors should be made in teams. A volunteer should never enter an unfamiliar home alone. This is for the protection of both resident and volunteer.

#### Program Materials

The State Office of Crime Prevention has the following materials available in reasonable quantities.

Neighborhood Watch Invitations  
Neighborhood Watch Membership Cards  
Neighborhood Watch Brochures  
Neighborhood Watch Outdoor Road Signs  
Neighborhood Watch Vinyl Window Stickers  
Emergency Telephone Number Stickers

These materials may be obtained free of charge on written request, accompanied by a brief explanation of where and how the program is to be launched. The Office of Crime Prevention reserves the right to limit quantities sent.

#### Additional Programs

Other programs that complement Neighborhood Watch programs are supported by State tax funds and are also available free of charge to localities.

Operation Identification. Operation I.D. is coordinated by the State Office of Crime Prevention. It is designed to discourage burglary and theft from homes and businesses by engraving property with an easily traced identification number. A person who joins the program receives a special two-part number. One part identifies the police department, the other identifies the property owner. Electric engravers for marking property are available on free loan. A property inventory form and warning decals for doors and windows are also available free. If property is lost or stolen anywhere in the United States, the Operation I.D. number clearly identifies its owner and helps in its return once it has been recovered.

Law enforcement agencies may obtain all the materials needed for an Operation I.D. program without charge from the Office of Crime Prevention, Division of Criminal Justice Services, Executive Park Tower, Stuyvesant Plaza, Albany, NY 12203. Citizens may obtain materials for the program without charge from their local law enforcement agency.

Security Surveys. A security survey is a mechanism used to determine weak points in residential or business security. By following a simple outline, police officers can recommend locks, alarms, lighting, or structural changes that decrease the chance of uninvited entry. Citizens can be trained to spot such deficiencies and to make recommendations for their

correction. However, before citizens undertake security surveys, they must be well trained and well screened by local law enforcement agencies. Citizens should work in teams, and must report in writing to the officer coordinating the program. These precautions can help avoid some serious problems.

Two-Way Radio and CB. Some communities have successfully recruited citizens' band (CB) users into neighborhood crime prevention programs. Citizens patrol the streets in their own cars equipped with CB radios. They are instructed to report crimes, accidents, emergencies and suspicious persons or activities to base stations, whose attendants phone police. Although citizen patrols have been successful in some communities, organizers must continually guard against vigilante tendencies. In some areas, police continuously monitor emergency Channel 9. Community members can be educated about the uses of Channel 9 whether a citizen patrol is formed or not.

Another program that has been successful without the risks that accompany citizen patrols involves businesses (taxi and trucking companies) that use two-way radio in their work. Such companies and their employees can be encouraged to keep a watchful eye out for suspicious persons or activities, and report them to their dispatchers or to police. Again participants must be cautioned against trying to stop crimes except in very unusual circumstances, which should be outlined by the law enforcement agency at the start of the program. These companies often have regular routes that drivers follow every day. Being very familiar with their areas, they can be a great asset to local police by acting as additional eyes and ears.

Direct Deposit. Direct Deposit is a voluntary federal program that allows individuals to have their regular government checks delivered directly to the bank of their choice, for deposit to their own checking or savings accounts. Participants can choose the bank to which payments will be sent; choose the kind of account (savings or checking) in which payments will be deposited; cancel Direct Deposit at any time, and begin receiving payments at home again, and change banks as desired. Anyone interested in joining Direct Deposit should ask his/her local bank for the necessary form. Persons getting payments from Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Railroad Retirement, Civil Service Retirement or the Veterans Administration are eligible. Direct Deposit eliminates standing in line, waiting for checks in the mail, having checks stolen, and being mugged on check day.

#### Summary

New York State Neighborhood Watch, a community crime prevention program, involves concerned residents as extra "eyes and ears" of the police. The State Office of Crime Prevention invites interested law enforcement agencies to initiate Neighborhood Watch programs, and urges all state residents to join Neighborhood Watch in cooperation with their local law enforcement agencies. Information and program materials are available from local law enforcement agencies, or from the Office of Crime Prevention toll-free at 1-800-342-4202.





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