



Neighborhood Watch

THE BASICS AND HOW TO GUIDE

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What is Neighborhood Watch?

A Neighborhood Watch Program is a group of people living in the same area who want to make their neighborhood safer by working together and in conjunction with local law enforcement to reduce crime and improve their quality of life.

Neighborhood Watch is one of the oldest and best known crime prevention concepts in North America. The initiative started in the 1960's and the

National Sheriffs' Association created the National Neighborhood Watch Program in 1972. The program relied on local citizens to monitor their residential areas.

After September 11, 2001, the Neighborhood Watch program had an uptick in implementation as more community members wanted to have a more active role in protecting their homes.

Today Neighborhood Watch Programs involve not only crime prevention but also disaster preparedness, emergency response, and terrorism awareness.

Activities and meetings held by Neighborhood Watch groups are as diverse across the country as their volunteers. Therefore, there is a lot of flexibility in what the group can focus on and can be based upon each individual neighborhood's needs.

What are the benefits of having a Neighborhood Watch?

- Crime reduction (trespassing, theft, vandalism, etc.)
- A better quality of life
- A greater sense of security, responsibility, and personal control
- Build community pride and unity
- Preparing for helping ourselves and others in our community
- Providing law enforcement agencies with volunteer support year round

The Substance Abuse Coalition of Kanabec County (SACK) believes Neighborhood Watch participants can help prevent substance abuse.

Be on the look out for:

- underage parties in fields, barns/sheds, etc.
- youth obtaining alcohol from adults at parties or outside of retail establishments
- unknown vehicles frequenting a location at all times of the day or night
- large gatherings of cars or people at homes when parents or guardians are out of town

Citizens become the extra eyes and ears of the law enforcement personnel which will reduce some of the burden on law enforcement.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Starting a Neighborhood Watch

Getting a Neighborhood Watch started is easier than you may think. It starts with a meeting with your neighbors.

This may seem obvious but communicating with each other is the first step toward identifying what you and your neighbors see as a priority in your neighborhood.

You can casually gauge interest through passing conversation at the mail box or while going for a walk.

Once you have established a group of people who are interested in forming a Watch group the first meeting can be planned.

This meeting can be as formal or informal as you want it to be. Just remember to invite local law enforcement to the meeting. They are here to help and support the group in it's efforts.

One thing to keep in mind is not to be discouraged if there is a low attendance at the first meeting. These things take time and not everyone will see the need for a watch group right away.

Over time, and as the group grows, more interest will be generated; and the value of the group will be better understood.



Five Steps to Building a Successful Neighborhood Watch

Step 1: Recruit and organize as many neighbors as possible

Talk with your fellow neighbors about concerns regarding crime and safety in the area.

Are there any particular concerns or general issue affecting the neighborhood? You can collect information from: police reports, personal observations, or the media.

Once information is collected about the problem, other concerns may emerge and help to demonstrate the need for an active Neighborhood Watch.

Information can be shared with members of the neighborhood through flyers, letters, and emails. Local media could also highlight community efforts to address concerns.

Now start recruiting and select individuals who want to form the "core" group. This core group will be responsible for recruiting others, meeting with local law enforcement, and building the Neighborhood Watch Program.

Step 2: Contact your local law enforcement agency and schedule a meeting

Now that community concerns or neighborhood issues have been identified and the core group has been established, the citizens should meet with representatives of their local law enforcement agency to build a partnership and help to resolve concerns.

Law enforcement officers can help by providing information, literature, training, and other important assets to help in building the Neighborhood Watch group.

The new Neighborhood Watch group should register on the National Neighborhood Watch website at: www.nnw.org.

Step 3: Discuss community concerns and develop an action plan

Your first meeting should be to prioritize concerns and issues that have been identified.

Some of these problems can be addressed by the group, but some are best deferred to the local sheriff's department to implement strategies.

This meeting should address concerns, issues, or problems AND develop goals or set realistic milestones to solve them. These goals or milestones are a plan of action that will help to guide the implementation of strategies, but also provide a means to assess and evaluate its effectiveness.

**"The Best
Security System**

is a

Good

Neighbor."

Brian Smith,

Kanabec County

Sheriff's Office

The Chief Deputy

Five Steps Continued...

Step 4: Hold regular meetings and train on relevant skills

Make sure the community is aware of your newly formed Neighborhood Watch. This can be accomplished by having a kickoff event. At this you can encourage others to get involved, start a newsletter, and provide training for emergency drills. Invite law enforcement to participate in your kickoff.

Step 5: Implement a phone tree and take action steps

Take steps to ensure that everyone in the neighborhood is aware of the Neighborhood Watch and is given the opportunity to become involved. Do not invite people to a meeting based only upon who you think is interested in the program. By encouraging everyone to join the group you reduce the likelihood of anyone feeling excluded or becoming offended.

Be sure to have a shared phone tree to keep everyone connected that is updated regularly. This way if there is an incident in the neighborhood everyone can be informed quickly and easily.

Action steps can be hosting a kick off, starting a newsletter, coordinating a training, or emergency drill.

Time and Commitment

It is important to clarify what level of commitment you can expect from everyone in the group. Some may not have time for developing materials, attending trainings, or holding drills; that is ok!

Remember that the primary goal of the group is to observe the neighborhood for any suspicious or illegal activity in an attempt to: increase safety in the neighborhood!



REMEMBER!

Community members only serve as the extra “eyes and ears” of law enforcement. They should report their observations of suspicious activities to law enforcement; however, citizens should never try to take action on those observations. Trained law enforcement should be the only ones ever to take action based on observations of suspicious activities.



What is Social Host?



A Social Host Ordinance can hold individuals (social hosts) criminally and sometimes civilly responsible for hosting or allowing an event or gathering on private or public property where persons under 21 years of age possess or consume alcohol, regardless of who supplied the alcohol.

A Social Host Ordinance is a local law that makes it illegal to:

- Provide an environment for underage drinking
- Allow underage drinking to take place, regardless of who provides the alcohol

What Are The Penalties for Violating This Ordinance?

Generally, violating the ordinance results in a misdemeanor, subject to a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

*Kanabec County
and the City of
Mora, MN
passed a Social
Host Ordinance
in May of 2010.*

How to protect yourself, guests, and Property during an event

- Verify the age of guests
- Control access to alcohol
- Control the quantity of alcohol
- Supervise persons under 21 years of age
- Be courteous to your neighbors and keep the noise level down
- Refuse entrance to uninvited guests, especially those who show up intoxicated
- Call the police for assistance, when necessary

Better Choices | Better Life



Substance Abuse Coalition
of Kanabec County

Learn more: www.sackcoalition.com

* Neighborhood Watch Manual. (2005, January 1). Retrieved August 1, 2014, from https://www.bja.gov/Publications/NSA_NW_Manual.pdf

* Substance Abuse Coalition of Kanabec County. (2009, January 1). Retrieved August 1, 2014, from <http://sackcoalition.org/>

Do you have an Emergency?

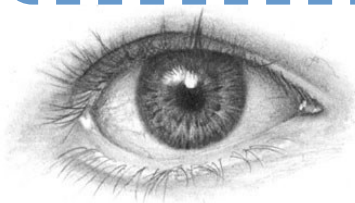
How to report suspicious activity: When to Call 911:

- Dial 911 or call the Sheriff's Office.
- Tell the dispatcher what happened and the exact location.
- Provide a detailed description of individuals or vehicles involved.
- Remain on the phone and stay calm.
- Be prepared to answer any follow-up questions.
- Medical emergencies: chest pains, extreme shortness of breath, uncontrolled bleeding.
- Motor vehicle accident.
- Fire.
- When a life is in danger.

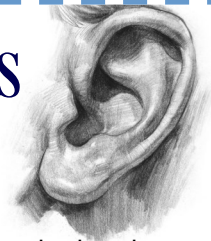


When NOT to Call 911:

- The power is off.
- Asking for directions to the hospital.
- Asking for telephone numbers of others.
- Requesting to speak with a particular officer.
- Inquiring as to the time of day.
- Inquiring about community activities and locations.



Using Your Eyes and Ears



A strong Watch group builds the skills needed to recognize unusual events or when something is not right and they should investigate. The following types of things that should be observed:

- Physical setting – Specific location, time of day, day of week.
- People – What do they look like, height, weight, ethnicity, gender, etc. How many are there?
- Specific Items – What is important?
- Routines – Notice any recurring patterns or routines? How often did they occur? Who was involved?

Observations skills could be practiced by looking at pictures of people and knowing how to describe them. Look for things that cannot change such as skin or eye color, tattoos, scars, moles, height, and weight.

Practice Observing Vehicles:

- Make: Ford, Chevrolet, Dodge, etc.
- Type: SUV, pickup truck, car, etc.
- Model: Corolla, Expedition, etc.
- License Plate Number: write it down on a piece of paper, your hand, or scratch it in the dirt. Even a partial number can help with a description of the vehicle.

Pay Attention to Suspicious Activities:

- Youth stumbling around or carrying backpacks into a party.
- Empty alcohol bottles being left on the street.
- A stranger loitering in your neighborhood or a vehicle cruising the streets repeatedly.
- Someone peering into windows or cars.
- Someone loitering around schools, parks, or secluded areas.
- Smell of Marijuana

- Open or broken doors and windows at an unoccupied residence.
- Loud music coming from a home at late hours.
- Youth arriving or leaving from homes at unusual hours.
- Multiple persons who appear to be working in unison and exhibiting suspicious behavior.
- Signs of forced entry or tampering with security or safety systems.

The effectiveness of the Sheriffs' Office's efforts is enhanced by active participants by citizens. Always report what has been observed. By reporting, citizens can make their communities safer and more secure. Additionally reduce: violence, victimization, crime, and improve overall quality of life.