

NEIGHBORHOOD



WATCH

SARASOTA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

EMERGENCY

9 1 1

NON-EMERGENCY

(941) 316-1201

A COMMUNITY MUTUAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
SPONSORED BY THE SARASOTA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
CRIME PREVENTION DIVISION



SARASOTA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

I. DEFINITION:

A program involving the joint efforts of the Sarasota Sheriff's Office and the community designed to enhance neighborhood security, heighten the community's power of observation and to encourage mutual assistance and concern among neighbors.

II. NEED:

In recent years, neighborhoods have experienced rapid change. The old, well established neighborhood has been replaced by a highly transient, growing community where people seek more and more privacy. This life-style tends to promote unfamiliarity with neighbors and a corresponding lack of concern. Unfortunately, this enhances the opportunities for the criminal element and increases the community's vulnerability to crime.

It has been shown in communities where there is a strong bond between neighbors that the crime rate can be reduced by as much as 56%. Your participation is vital for the success of this program.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM:

The main objective of the Neighborhood Watch program is to reduce the incidence of crime by:

1. Increasing citizen's awareness of burglary and other neighborhood crime through a continuing information program.
2. Training citizens in the means of better property security and assisting them in making their properties more secure.
3. Developing a neighborhood action program where neighbors help watch each other's properties and report suspicious persons and activities to law enforcement agencies.
4. Encouraging all citizens to cooperated with law enforcement agencies.
- 5 Enlisting each residence in the Operation Identification program.

IV. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. BLOCK CAPTAIN

1. Hosts a Neighborhood Watch program meeting.
2. Personally visits each residence in his/her block, distributing the invitations and announcing the meeting and encouraging neighbors to participate.
3. Acts as a base station for Operation Identification. In this manner, neighbors can pickup Operation Identification materials from their block captains in order to participate in the program. The goal - 100% participation - is essential, and in order to achieve this goal the block captain is encouraged to personally contact those neighbors that have not participated in the program.

4. Acts as a liaison with the Sheriff's Office and disseminates any information communicated to him which may lead to the solution of a crime.
5. Distributes crime prevention materials to those residents who were unable to attend the meeting.
6. Distributes Neighborhood Watch window identification stickers to participating members.

B. BLOCK WATCHERS

1. Act as eyes and ears for your neighbors and report any suspicious activity.
2. Study crime prevention materials furnished to them.
3. Check neighbors' homes when out of town.
4. Cooperate and assist the block captain.
5. Secure their homes in compliance with recommendations in the home security booklet.
6. Participate in Operation Identification.

V. PROGRAM MATERIALS:

- A. Neighborhood Watch Manual - this manual explains the program and how it is organized.
- B. Neighborhood Watch Invitations - these invitations are for the use of the block captain to announce a neighborhood meeting.
- C. Neighborhood Watch Map - this map records the names, addresses and phone numbers of the immediate neighbors of a block watcher. This information aids the block watcher in giving adequate information where they are reporting suspicious activity.

- D. What is suspicious? - this booklet informs the block watchers of suspicious activities to be reported to the police.
- E. Brochures will be furnished on residential security - explaining security procedures and Operation Identification.
- F. Operation Identification Decal - issued only on verification of engraving belongings; the warning decals are for windows or doors and announce the resident has marked valuable possessions which are easily identifiable by police agencies.
- G. Engraver Control Sheet - this record is maintained by the block captain and is used for controlling the issuance of engravers and recording the names, addresses, and phone numbers of Operation Identification participants.
- H. Inventory Sheets.
- I. Membership Roster.
- J. Suspect/Vehicle Description Sheet.





SUSPECT IDENTITY CHART

Race_____	Socks_____
Sex_____	Physical Defects_____
Age_____	Vehicle_____
Height_____	Make_____
Weight_____	Year_____
Hair_____	Model_____
Eyes_____	Color_____
Complexion_____	License #_____
Scars, marks_____	Dents or marks_____
Hat_____	Direction of travel_____
Coat or jacket_____	How long ago_____
Shirt_____	Weapon present_____
Pants_____	Money container_____
Shoes_____	

WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS?

Your local Sheriff's Office cannot function effectively without the concerned assistance of responsible citizens. They are depending on you to call and report all suspicious persons or actions.

Some people fail to call simply because they are not aware of what seemingly innocent activities might be suspicious. Others may notice suspicious activity and be hesitant to call for fear of seeming a "nosey neighbor" or a "crank". Still others take it for granted that someone else has already called.

CALL YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF'S OFFICER IMMEDIATELY about all suspicious activity and do it yourself. You are NOT "bothering" the Sheriff's Office when you report suspicious activity. DO NOT worry about being embarrassed if your suspicions prove unfounded. **THINK, INSTEAD ABOUT WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU DO NOT ACT.**

"INFORMATION MOST OFTEN NEEDED

WHAT HAPPENED? WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? WHERE DID IT HAPPEN? WAS ANYONE HURT?

DESCRIPTION OF PERSONS: (Including clothing) When describing suspects, notice age, race, sex, height and weight. Compare your own weight and height with the suspects. Pick out some unique characteristics (scars, nose, jewelry, etc.) that will help you identify the suspect in the future if need be.

DESCRIPTION OF VEHICLE: License number, make, model, color, any noticeable damage and direction of travel.

REMEMBER: FOR ASSISTANCE DIAL 9-1-1.

"OBVIOUS THINGS TO WATCH FOR"

Basically, anything that seems even slightly "out of place" or that is occurring at an unusual time of day could be criminal activity. Some of the most obvious things to watch for and report include:

A stranger entering your neighbor's house when it is unoccupied may be a burglar.

A scream heard anywhere may be a robbery or assault. Offers of merchandise at ridiculously low prices could mean stolen property.

Anyone removing accessories, license plates, or gas from a car should be reported.

Anyone peering into parked cars may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables left displayed in the car.

Persons entering or leaving a business place after hours could mean burglars.

A sound of breaking glass or loud explosive noises could mean an accident, burglary, or vandalism.

Persons loitering around schools, parks, secluded areas, or in the neighborhood could be sex offenders.

Persons around the neighborhood who do not live there could be burglars.

"SOME NOT SO OBVIOUS THINGS TO WATCH FOR"

Not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal by any means. There are many perfectly legitimate door to door salesmen, repairmen, and servicemen moving around our neighborhoods all the time. But criminals do take advantage of this by assuming the guise of legitimate business representatives. **After all, if a criminal looked like a criminal, no one would have any trouble spotting them.**

Check identification of all solicitors, meter readers, and repairmen prior to allowing entry into your home. Be suspicious of an alleged delivery man with a wrong address or asking if someone else lives there. Some of the not so obvious things to watch for are:

SOMEONE GOING DOOR TO DOOR IN YOUR

NEIGHBORHOOD: Watch for awhile. If, after a few houses are visited, one or more of the persons tries a door to see if it is locked, looks into the windows, or goes into the back or side yard, it could be a burglary. Some action is even more suspicious; if any person remains in the front while another goes into the back or side yard, or if there is a car following a few houses away, call the Sheriff's Office immediately; do not wait for the person to leave.

ONE OR MORE JUVENILES WALKING CASUALLY THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD LOOKING INTO AUTOMOBILES, BACKYARDS, ETC.

ANYONE FORCING ENTRANCE TO, OR TAMPERING WITH A RESIDENCE, BUSINESS OR VEHICLE.

A PERSON RUNNING, ESPECIALLY IF CARRYING SOMETHING OF VALUE.

SOMEONE CARRYING PROPERTY: If it's at an unusual hour or in an unusual place, or if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.

A PERSON EXHIBITING UNUSUAL MENTAL OR PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS: may be injured, under the influence of drugs or otherwise needing medical or psychiatric assistance.

HUMAN TRAFFIC TO AND FROM CERTAIN RESIDENCE: Is not suspicious unless it occurs on a daily or very regular basis; especially during late or unusual hours. It could possibly be the scene of vice activities or a fence operation.

ANY PERSON TAKING A SHORTCUT THROUGH A BACKYARD: may have just broken into your neighbor's home.

ANY VEHICLE MOVING SLOWLY AND WITHOUT LIGHTS OR FOLLOWING A COURSE THAT APPEARS AIMLESS OR REPETITIVE IN ANY LOCATION: But particularly so in areas of schools, parks and playgrounds. Occupants may be looking for places to rob or to burglarize, or they could be drug pushers or sex offenders.

PARKED OCCUPIED VEHICLES CONTAINING ONE OR MORE PERSONS: If it is an unusual hour they could be possible lookouts for a burglary in progress, even if the occupants appear to be legitimate.

VEHICLES BEING LOADED WITH VALUABLES, IF PARKED IN FRONT OF A CLOSED BUSINESS: Or unattended residence - even if the vehicle is a legitimate looking commercial vehicle.

More and more professional thieves are taking the time and trouble to customize their vehicles with special signs in order to move more freely without suspicion.

APPARENT BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS CONDUCTED FROM A VEHICLE: especially around schools or parks. If juveniles are involved, it could mean a possible drug sale.

PERSONS BEING FORCED INTO VEHICLES: especially if juveniles or females, it may mean a possible kidnapping.

AN ABANDONED VEHICLE PARKED ON YOUR BLOCK: may be a stolen car.

CONTINUOUS REPAIR OPERATIONS AT NON BUSINESS LOCATIONS: could mean stolen property is being stripped, repainted or otherwise altered.

OPEN OR BROKEN DOORS OR WINDOWS AT A CLOSED BUSINESS OR RESIDENCE: whose owners are absent could mean a burglary is in progress or already completed.

A BEAM FROM A FLASHLIGHT IN A NEIGHBORS HOME: especially if they are away, could mean a burglary is in progress.

PERSONS WEARING OR CARRYING BLOODY CLOTHING: could be a suspect or victim of a serious crime.

PERSONS MAKING A QUICK CHANGE OF VEHICLES: may be attempting to elude the police or abandoning a stolen vehicle.

While some, if not all, of the suspicious situations described could have innocent explanations, your local Sheriff's Office would rather investigate a crime prone situation than to be called when it is too late. **Your call could save a life, prevent an injury, or stop a criminal act. BE ALERT!**

It is extremely important that you become thoroughly familiar with all the instructions on this page so that if and when the time comes that you must function as a reporting victim or neighbor when a crime is in progress or an emergency exists, you will be prepared.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING TO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

1. Identify Yourself (*name, address, and phone number*).
2. Type of Crime (*burglary, assault, ect.*)
3. Crime in Progress (*or when it occurred*).
4. Where (*name of building or landmark if no specific address can be given*).
5. Suspect Armed (*gun, knife, mace, etc.*).
6. Description (*sex, age, race, height, weight, hair, eyes, clothing*).
7. Vehicle (*color, make, license plate number*).
8. Direction in which the suspect was traveling.
9. What was taken.
10. How entry was gained (*door, window, etc.*)

PROCEDURE FOR USE OF TELEPHONE CHAIN

- Keep pen and special phone pad near phone at all times to write down information given to you.
- Be brief and precise in all calls.
- This is not a social call! Only the issue at hand is to be discussed, and that quickly.
- Relay information exactly as it is given to you.
- Do not delete from nor add to information given.
- Repeat it back to the person calling you.
- If you have been victimized, call your neighborhood director immediately AFTER calling the Sheriff's Office, and following the above form.

