

# BUILD A WATCH GROUP

## 5 Steps to Building a Successful Neighborhood Watch in Your Area

**Neighborhood Watch, which began as a grassroots effort more than 30 years ago to protect homes from burglary, has had its profile raised in recent years as it became integral to the nation's homeland security strategy.**

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that stresses education and common sense. It teaches citizens how to help themselves by identifying and reporting suspicious activity in their neighborhoods. It also gives citizens the opportunity to give back to their neighborhood by working together to make the neighborhood safer and improve the quality of life. Its easy to start Neighborhood Watch. All you need to do is gather community partners at an initial meeting. Use the guide for conducting a successful meeting found in this packet and follow the steps to build an effective and successful Neighborhood Watch Program.

### **THE 5 STEPS**

**STEP 1: Organize citizens**

**STEP 2: Coordinate with Law Enforcement**

**STEP 3: Identify the problems and develop strategies**

**STEP 4: Train**

**STEP 5: Take action steps**

### **1st**

Talk with your fellow neighbors about their concerns regarding crime in the area and determine the level of interest others have in starting a Watch Group. While it is not necessary to have every household involved, incorporating as many of your neighbors as possible will increase your effectiveness and your likelihood for success in reducing crime.

### **2nd**

Contact your local law enforcement agency and invite them to meet with your group at a time and place convenient to your Watch Group members. It is essential for your group to work in collaboration with law enforcement. Neighborhood Watch is a cooperative effort. Law enforcement needs to let the citizens know what is expected of them as Watch Group members and the citizens need to let law enforcement know what their concerns are within the community.

### **3rd**

Working with a law enforcement advisor, your Watch Group should identify patterns of crime in the area and develop strategies to address these problems. Your group will need to appoint a block captain to coordinate these efforts and to design a phone tree for reporting crime and suspicious activities.

### **4th**

Have law enforcement train your Watch Group members in Terrorism Awareness, Emergency Preparedness/Emergency Response, and basic crime prevention techniques such as



target hardening, eyes-and-ears, and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

### **5th**

Take active steps in your community: Have a kickoff event to announce your formation and to encourage others to get involved. Post signs in and around your neighborhood. Start a Neighborhood Watch newsletter and schedule times for Watch Group members to do citizen patrols.

It is important to keep your group active and enthusiastic. Maintaining communication between group members and your law enforcement agency are very important. Be sure to schedule regular meetings so that your group remains focused. As concerns within the community change and crime patterns evolve make sure you tailor your efforts around the new problems.

If all of those involved in the Neighborhood Watch program are aiming for the same goal, the program will be successful. This is not an overnight process; it takes patience, planning and enthusiasm. Studies show that once a Neighborhood Watch program deteriorates, criminals notice and quickly resume their illegal activities.