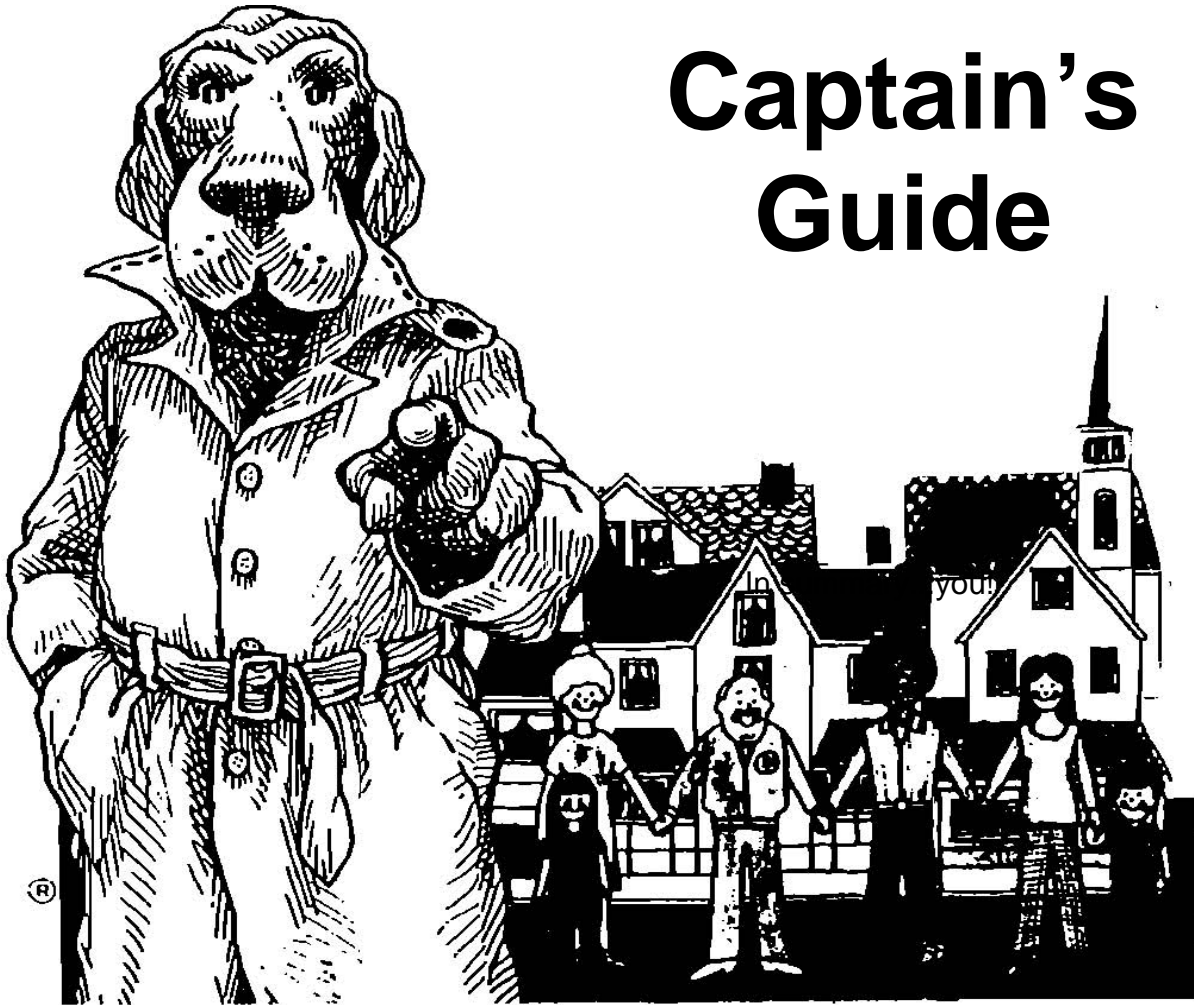


# Block Captain's Guide



Join Neighborhood Watch and  
... TAKE A BITE OUT OF

# CRIME

ANTIOCH POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CRIME PREVENTION

Want to know the  
best crime  
prevention device  
ever invented?

A good neighbor!



In fact, neighbors working together in  
cooperation with law enforcement can  
make one of the best crime-fighting  
teams around.

We call it ...  
Neighborhood Watch

# What is it?

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program which enlists the active participation of citizens in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime in their communities.

It Involves:

- Neighbors getting to know each other and working together in a program of mutual assistance;
- Citizens being trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhoods; and
- Implementation of crime prevention techniques, such as home security, Operation Identification and others.

You may hear it called Neighborhood Watch, Home Alert, Citizen Crime Watch or Block Watch. The names differ, but the idea is the same: Neighbors looking out for each other.



# Who can participate?



- City people
- Country people
- Suburban residents
- Apartment dwellers
- Mobile home residents
- Young people
- Senior citizens
- Men
- Women
- Families
- Couples
- Singles...

In summary...you!

## Why Neighborhood Watch?

--There cannot be a law enforcement officer on every corner, so citizen involvement is essential to combat crime.

--You and your neighbors are the ones who really know what is going on in your community.

--By cooperating with each other and the police, people can help fight crime in their community in the most effective way – before it begins!

# **How do I start a Neighborhood Watch program in my area?**

## **First, get organized.**

### **Contact your local law enforcement agency...**

- Many law enforcement agencies have a crime prevention officer or specialist who can help you organize your initial meeting. The Neighborhood Watch phone number is 779-6980.
- Explain that you would like to start a Neighborhood Watch group and ask for any assistance they might offer.
- Ask about the crime situation in your neighborhood.

### **Talk to your neighbors...**

- Canvass your neighborhood for interest.
- Discuss crime problems in your area, using the information you received from your local law enforcement agency.
- Briefly explain the value of Neighborhood Watch programs.
- Ask about convenient time to schedule your initial Neighborhood Watch meeting.

Be sure to mention that:

- Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings. We recommend one meeting every three months.
- It does not ask that anyone take any personal risks to prevent crime.
- Neighborhood Watch leaves the responsibility for apprehending criminals where it belongs -with your law enforcement agency.

## Arrange a date, time and place for the first meeting ....

- Select a time that is convenient for most neighbors and your crime prevention commissioner.
- Plan the meeting date far enough in advance to give everyone adequate notice.
  - Hold the meeting in the home of a neighbor to foster an informal, comfortable atmosphere.
- Remind people of the meeting date as it approaches (two to three days before).

Do not be disappointed if everyone cannot attend. One hundred percent neighborhood participation is desired, but is not a requirement for the program to work.

# The first meeting...

- Opening remarks
- Have everyone introduce themselves
- Briefly explain the purpose of the meeting

Comments from your Neighborhood Watch presenter...

- Your Neighborhood Watch presenter will cover many of following topics:

A brief introduction regarding his/her position in crime prevention.

An explanation of the Neighborhood Watch program.

The specific crime problems in your area (statistics related to your area).

Effective crime prevention techniques for home and neighborhood safety.

Other specialized crime prevention programs available in your community.

How to report crime: what to look for, how to describe the person, vehicle or activity; and what other information to give, i.e., location, name, etc.

## **Select a Block Captain ...**

The role of the Block Captain is to:

- Be the spokesperson for the group.
- Serve as liaison between law enforcement and your Neighborhood Watch group.
- Organize and arrange Neighborhood Watch meetings (with neighbors sharing the responsibility of hosting the meetings).
- Maintain a master list of all members.

In order to share the workload and responsibilities, the Block Captain position should be rotated on a regularly scheduled basis.

## **Develop and distribute maps ...**

To help members give adequate information when reporting suspicious activity in the neighborhood, a map of your area should be developed to:

- Clearly identify streets and cross-streets.
- Show the name, address and phone number of each home.

-Include emergency numbers for police, sheriff, fire and ambulance.

It is important that this map be kept updated reflecting all changes in residents, phone numbers, address, etc.

## **Gather and share information ...**

Knowing your neighbors' basic habits and belongings will help you to recognize unusual or suspicious activities.

Basic information you might exchange includes:

- Home and work phone numbers
- Number, ages and identify family members
- Work hours
- School hours of children
- Number and types of automobiles
- Who has dog(s)
- Planned vacations or visitors
- Scheduled deliveries or repairs
- Any other helpful information

# You are on your way...

Now that your Neighborhood Watch network is established, be sure that everyone understands and observes the following general guidelines:

- Be suspicious. Report unusual or suspicious behavior to the police (778-2441). Write down descriptions of the person(s) and license numbers of any vehicles involved.

- Keep a trusted neighbor informed if your house will be unoccupied for an extended period. It is important to leave the neighbor a way of reaching you if an emergency should arise.

- Look after your neighbor's house when they're away, and ask them to look after yours. This includes collecting mail, newspapers and other deliveries which would indicate at a glance that no one is home.

- Establish and attend meetings with your local crime prevention commissioner. Find out about local crime trends and what you can do about them.

- Above all, be concerned. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe.

- And remember -your job is to *report* crime. The responsibility for apprehending criminals belongs to the police.

# Program activities

The key to keeping a Neighborhood Watch group active is maintaining people's interest over time. The goal is to create "small town" environments, even in large cities, where people care about their neighbors and their neighborhoods.

Active neighborhood groups can make changes through their local officials, such as improving street lighting. At the same time, neighbors can hold block parties, potluck dinners and neighborhood cleanup campaigns.

Neighborhood Watch programs can be fun. Remember people will most likely become involved and remain interested if the programs are fun as well as meaningful. Use your imagination. Some specific crime prevention activities that you can implement are contained on the following pages.

# Home Security ...

--Residents can learn how to secure their homes with:

Effective door and window locks

Adequate exterior lighting

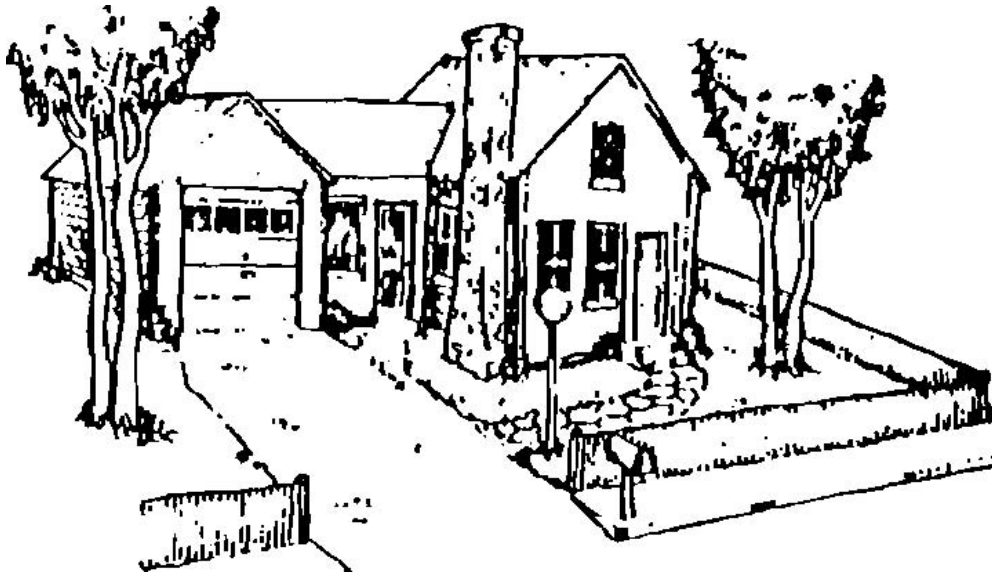
Landscaping

Security "habits" (such as always *using* the locks you have installed).

-See if your law enforcement agency provides "home security surveys" for individual residences; or

- Have a Crime Prevention Commissioner speak to your Neighborhood Watch group about home security,

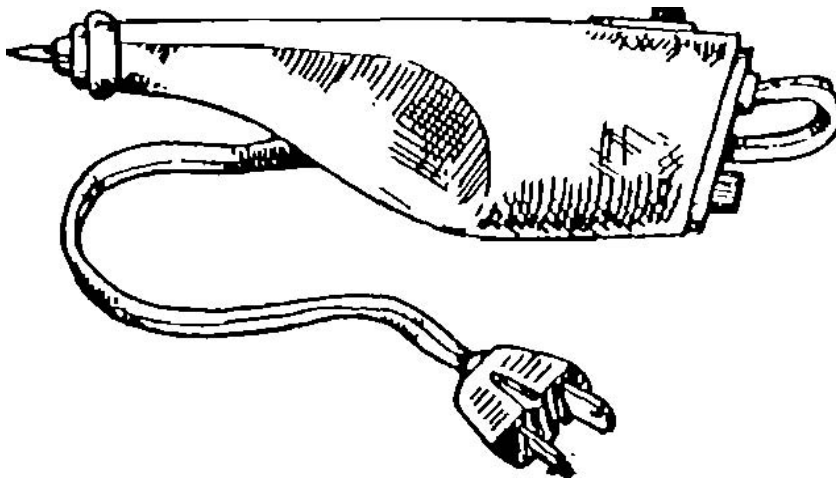
-Obtain home security information from your local law enforcement agency. Contact 779-6980.



# Operation Identification...

-Successful Operation Identification programs help deter burglars, assist in the arrest and prosecution of criminals and facilitate the return of stolen property.

-Residents should be encouraged to engrave their driver's license number (preceded by the letters "CA") on their personal property.



Engraver tools can be borrowed by calling the Neighborhood Watch line (779-6980).

## Apartments or multi-unit dwellings

Neighborhood Watch is easily supplemented with programs to meet the particular needs of residents within multi-unit complexes. In addition to the programs already discussed, consider the following:

--If you do not feel comfortable meeting with all of your neighbors, pick just a few and agree to watch out for one another.

--Home and building security:

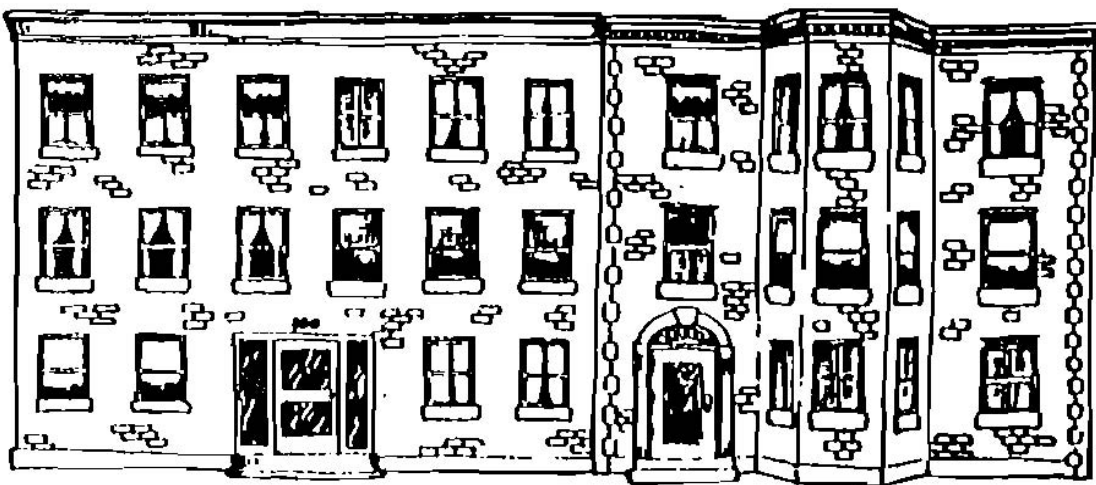
Have a Neighborhood Watch representative instruct your group and landlord on the best security devices and practices for apartments.

Work with your landlord to install necessary locks, lighting, etc. Take special precautions with patio and/or terrace areas.

--Personal safety:

The most effective security system for apartment buildings is a locked lobby that requires a key or cautiously operated buzzer system to admit people.

If this it's not feasible, the Neighborhood Watch group can look into other personal safety systems -especially with regard to the use of elevators and laundry rooms.



## **And finally, if a crime does occur...report it!**

Sounds easy? It is. Unfortunately only about half of all crimes are ever reported. Too bad, because police cannot do anything if they do not know what happened. They say information from people like you is the key to solving many crimes.



Even an anonymous tip is better than no report at all. So do not hesitate! Follow this rule: If you see something suspicious, call the police (778-2441) -fast -so that the police can act -fast. The longer you wait, the harder it is to catch the criminal.

# Remember...

--Call the police immediately (778-2441). A five-minute delay means that the chance of catching the criminal drops by two-thirds.

--In many cases it is what victims and witnesses tell police about the criminal that results in an arrest. So tell the police as much as you can.

--Sometimes, due to limited resources and personnel, the police may not be able to respond immediately. They have to prioritize their calls based on danger to human life involved. Don't be discouraged. They will get to you as soon as possible.

And once you have reported the crime, stick with it.

--It pays to prosecute. Three-fourths of the criminals who are prosecuted are found guilty.

--Being a witness in court is not as much trouble as you think. Many communities have special programs to help victims and witnesses with transportation, day care services and scheduling of their cases.

--For further information on crime victim rights and services, write to the Attorney General's Crime Prevention Center.