



# Henrico County Neighborhood Watch



*Start-up Packet*

## Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program involving the joint efforts of the Division of Police and the community. It is designed to encourage the active participation of citizens, in cooperation with the Division of Police, to enhance neighborhood security and to encourage mutual assistance and concern among neighbors. Neighborhoods have changed greatly over recent years. Communities are highly transient, with citizens seeking more and more privacy. The connection between neighbors and communities has been lost. Neighborhood Watch is an organized program that tries to rebuild this connection. It encourages neighbors to look out for each other and to take pride in their communities.

This booklet has been designed to assist the citizens of Henrico County and the Division of Police in setting up Neighborhood Watch programs. The various points discussed are offered as suggestions on how a Neighborhood Watch program might be established. The extent of neighborhood problems and the commitment by neighborhood residents will determine which of the suggestions should be adopted.

The goal of Neighborhood Watch is to reduce crime and the fear of crime through the following objectives:

- ◆ Encourage citizens to be proactive regarding crime prevention
- ◆ Encourage neighbors to look out for each other
- ◆ Increase awareness of neighborhood crime
- ◆ Increase home security
- ◆ Active surveillance of neighborhood by residents

- ◆ Encourage all neighbors to report crime and suspicious situations
- ◆ Participation in Neighborhood Watch crime prevention tactics, such as Address Display, Operation Identification, and Operation Night Light

## **How to Begin**

- I. Call several neighbors together and form a planning committee
  
- II. Determine the area to be included and prepare block maps to help organize your group.
  
- III. Select the Watch Coordinator and Block Captains.
  - A. Duties of the Watch Coordinator
    1. Act as the liaison between the Division of Police and the Block Captains
    2. Assist the Division of Police by disseminating information to the Block Captains
    3. Attend quarterly IMPACT meetings at the Henrico County Training Center
    4. Coordinate the activities of the Block Captains
    5. Maintain a master list of all Watch members
    6. Strive to get 100% participation in the Address Display, Operation Identification, and Operation Night Light programs
  
  - B. Duties of the Block Captains
    1. Act as the liaison between the Coordinator and the Neighbors

2. Assist the Coordinator by disseminating information to the neighbors
3. Recruit new Watch members
4. Assist the Watch Coordinator in planning and conducting Watch meetings (we recommend that watch groups meet at least quarterly)
5. Prepare and maintain a Data Sheet for each family involved in the Watch on their block for Block Captain's records
6. Prepare and maintain a Telephone Tree/e-mail tree to disseminate information to watch members in case of emergency
7. Make sure each member has an accurate copy of the block map
8. Coordinate the efforts of the neighbors on their block

IV. Schedule a meeting between the Coordinator and Block Captains

- A. Select a suitable meeting place
- B. Invite all interested neighbors to attend
- C. Use this manual as a lesson plan for the meeting
- D. Designate someone to take minutes to be made available to the neighbors who are unable to attend

V. Establish a regular meeting schedule for the Watch Coordinator and Block Captains to discuss neighborhood problems and plan neighborhood watch activities

VI. Submit the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator's contact information to the Henrico Police Neighborhood Watch Coordinator

- VII. Install Neighborhood Watch signs to warn criminals to stay away. (Information about placement of these signs will be provided when your Neighborhood Watch becomes active.)

### **Role of the Neighborhood Watch**

1. Maintain a cooperative system of surveillance over your neighborhood's property and residents.
2. Promptly and accurately report crimes and suspicious persons/activities to the Division of Police
3. Assist and encourage all neighbors to participate in Crime Prevention Programs such as:
  - ◆ Address Display (See appendix 4)
  - ◆ Operation Identification (See appendix 5)
  - ◆ Operation Night Light and Home Security Surveys (See appendix 6)
4. Maintain a continuing communication system between neighborhood residents
5. Start a Neighborhood Newsletter or web page
6. Encourage all neighbors to get involved in neighborhood matters

### **Role of the Division of Police**

1. To provide a newsletter to the Coordinators for distribution to the Block Captains and neighbors
2. To notify the Coordinators of any crime trend that may threaten the neighborhoods
3. To respond to specific questions or requests for information from the Watch groups

4. To provide crime prevention information to the Watch groups
5. To provide regularly scheduled crime prevention programs for Watch group members to attend, on such topics as: identity fraud, larcenies from autos, and personal safety

## Neighborhood Watch Signs

The Henrico County Department of Public Works will provide two (2) Neighborhood Watch signs to each new Neighborhood Watch group **free of charge**; provided the following conditions have been met:

- A neighborhood must first have complied with all the requirements set forth in the NW start up packet to be eligible for Watch signs.
- Select Coordinator and Block Captains
- Submit contact information for Coordinator to the Division of Police
- Establish a regular meeting schedule to discuss neighborhood problems and plan Neighborhood Watch activities (meet at least quarterly)
- Strive for 100% participation in the Neighborhood Watch program
- Strive for 100% participation in the following crime prevention programs: address display, operation night light, and operation identification
- Strive to develop complete and accurate block maps, telephone trees, and Neighborhood Watch Data Sheets
- The Henrico Police NW Coordinator may then approve the signs to be assigned.
- Call Henrico County Department of Public Works at 727-8296 to make arrangements to pick up signs. Public Works will provide the signs and posts but will **not** dig the hole or set the posts. The posts may be placed in an individual's yard or in a common area of a subdivision.
- The NW group is responsible for up keep of the signs and posts. If for any reason the posts or signs need replacement, the Henrico Police NW coordinator must be contacted.

The Henrico Police Neighborhood Watch Coordinator will facilitate the distribution of the Neighborhood Watch signs.

Please feel free to contact the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator with any questions at (804) 501-4856.

## Address Display

The first project you should undertake is to be sure that all the homes in the watch are clearly displaying their address numbers. Precious time can be lost if emergency equipment cannot locate the correct address.

We suggest that you do not display your name on your mailbox. Annoying or obscene telephone callers can locate their victims by seeing a name and address on a mailbox and matching it with the number in the telephone book.

### Address Tips:

- ◆ Use numbers at least 3 inches tall
- ◆ Use numbers that are a contrasting color from the background they are displayed on
- ◆ Consider painting numbers on the curbing near the driveway (Keep this area clear of debris, such as fallen leaves)
- ◆ Put numbers on both sides of your mailbox
- ◆ Use signs or arrows to show which address goes with which home if several mailboxes are grouped together
- ◆ Help your handicapped and senior neighbors display their addresses



## Operation Identification

Stolen articles that lack positive identification marks create many problems. Often a citizen will report something stolen but will not know the serial number of the item for it to be tracked through state and national information systems. Property, that lacks any identification marks or cannot be traced to the owner through the serial number, is taken into police custody. It cannot be returned to the rightful owner, and it cannot be used as evidence against the criminal. He or she may be released without being held accountable for the crime he or she committed against you.

To help protect your belongings, use an Operation Identification Form, available from the Division of Police Crime Prevention Unit, to record the serial numbers of your valuables. Keep this completed form in a secure place, such as a safe deposit box or at a relative's residence. Be sure and update the form as needed.

You may wish to mark your property with a different identifiable number using an engraver. Due to the danger of releasing your personal information, especially to someone who has stolen your property, it is not recommended that you use your social security number on your belongings. Choose a 4 to 8 character number or word and number that is specific to you. Examples: your street address numbers, the last 4 digits of your home, work, or cell phone, or your initials and your spouse's date of birth. Preface the number with the letters VA to indicate that it is a Virginia license number.

Another way to protect your belongings is to video tape them. This is a very valuable asset should you be the victim of a burglary or even a house fire. Keep the tape in a safe place, such as a relative's house or a safe deposit box. Digital cameras may also be used. Put the photos on a CD or a 3.5 floppy and keep it in a safe place. Remember, just like any other computer file, always have a backup disc in a safe place in case the original is destroyed.

## **Home Security Surveys**

Let the Division of Police help you make educated decisions about security hardware. Call the Crime Prevention unit at 501-4838 to schedule a free Home Security Survey. We will come to your home and inspect for security weaknesses and other hazards.

Every home should have deadbolt locks on all exterior doors. Sliding doors and windows should be secured to prevent them from being lifted out of their tracks while locked. All windows should be secured with auxiliary locks or pins. Invite us to your home and find out how easy and inexpensive it can be to secure your home.

## **Operation Night Light**

The purpose of Neighborhood Watch is to encourage neighbors to watch for crime. You can't watch if it's too dark to see. Most criminals don't want to be seen. You can keep them away by turning on your outside lights during the night. Lighting is a major deterrent to crime during the hours of darkness.

It costs less than \$50.00 a year to have a 40-watt bulb at your front door and a 60-watt bulb at the rear turned on all night. This is very inexpensive protection and it enhances the beauty of your neighborhood.