



A GUIDE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH LEADERS

Partnering to make Greensboro safe for all people.



GREENSBORO POLICE DEPARTMENT



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ABOUT COMMUNITY WATCH:

Community Watch Defined

Community Watch is a crime prevention program that relies on the active participation of residents, in cooperation with law enforcement, to reduce crime and victimization in their communities. Residents use common sense crime prevention practices and are trained to recognize and report suspicious activity.

Community Watch is NOT

- A vigilante group or residents taking the law into their own hands
- A group of residents pursuing criminals themselves or becoming involved in criminal events

Getting Started

- Understand the purpose and goals of community watch (*page 3*)
- Understand who is involved and the responsibilities of those involved (*page 4*)
- Starting the group (*page 5*)
 1. **Organizing interest**
 2. **Choosing member roles**
 3. **Developing a meeting plan**
 4. **Developing a communication plan**
- Understand how to maintain a successful community watch (*page 6*)

Community Resource Teams

District 1
100 Police Plaza
Greensboro, NC 27401
336-373-3677

District 3
300 South Swing Road
Greensboro, NC 27409
336-373-2637

District 2
2602 South Elm-Eugene Street
Greensboro, NC 27406
336-373-2496

District 4
1106 Maple Street
Greensboro, NC 27405
336-373-4035

To determine what division you are located in visit our website at www.gsopd.org and click on "Our Communities."

PURPOSE AND GOALS:

Police officers cannot be everywhere, at all times. In the absence of an officer, a successful community watch group can be the “eyes and ears” of law enforcement. Residents have an understanding of what goes on in their communities, and can reduce crime by utilizing prevention practices and cooperating with law enforcement.

General Purpose of Community Watch

- Residents can problem-solve current problems in their community
- Residents can work together to achieve future goals
- Residents can gather resources to address community needs
- Residents can improve the quality of life in their community

Specific Goals of Community Watch

- Residents build relationships with community officers through education and cooperation
- Residents build relationships with each other through communication and cooperation
- Residents learn how to make their homes and property more secure through education
- Residents watch out for each other, the neighborhood, and report suspicious activity to the police

Standards for Maintaining “Active” Status as a Watch Group- *The designated Community Resource Officer has discretion to decide if groups are within compliance of these standards for the maintenance of their group status and community signage.*

- Must have active Watch Captain
- Watch Captain will attend Community Advisory Council (or equivalent for their district) once a quarter
- Groups must hold 2 meetings a year
 - Participation in National Night Out can include one of the group’s annual meetings
- Watch Group meetings should have at least 5 percent attendance from that community

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Members

- Any resident of a community can join
- Residents whom share a manageable geographical unit: a block, neighborhood, apartment, business area, public housing complex, etc.

Member Roles

- Watch Members:
 - “Eyes and ears”- reports suspicious activity/vehicles to police and Block Captain
 - Shares information, communicates with group
- Block Captain:
 - A point of contact on each street included in a watch (the more blocks included in a watch will need more block captains)
 - “Eyes and ears”, shares information, communicates with group
 - Supports Watch Captain in maintaining the group
 - Recruits new members
- Watch Captain:
 - “Eyes and ears”, shares information, communicates with group
 - Recruits new members, delegates responsibility among members
 - Distributes news/information to the group including: current crime prevention information, meeting dates, community activities and events
 - Leads meetings, develops agendas, coordinates with law enforcement

Greensboro Police Department

- Guides members as they form Community Watches
- Provides leadership and supports members as they face challenges and work on goals
- Communicates directly with Watch Captain
- Offers updated crime prevention information and training
- Orders Community Watch signs (maximum of 2) provided by the City. Placement will be determined by our Greensboro city ordinance
- Responsible for determining whether watch groups are “active”, in accordance with the standards listed on page 3

STARTING A COMMUNITY WATCH:

1. Organize Interest

- Talk with neighbors and express your desire to get a community watch started in your neighborhood. Solicit their help in getting this project going. This should include finding how much interest your neighbors have in participating in a watch group.
- Once there is enough interest and you have determined that a community watch would be successful in your community, contact the community resource team in your district.

2. Choosing Member Roles

- Select block captains and a watch captain who are responsible for organizing meetings and relaying information to members.

3. Develop a Meeting Plan

- Find a place to hold a meeting. Your Community Resource Officer will conduct this meeting to tell all the residents what a community watch is and what their responsibilities are as members.
- Contact your crime prevention officer to ensure they will be able to attend the initial meeting.
- Decide when and where you will have regularly scheduled meetings for the group.

4. Developing a Communication Plan

- Decide how members will communicate with one another. The Greensboro Police Department suggests watch groups utilize [Nextdoor](#) to do so.
- Talk with your Community Resource Officer to determine the best way to communicate with him/her.

MAINTAINING A COMMUNITY WATCH:

Recruitment

- Talk with new neighbors, and make special efforts to involve the elderly, working parents, and young people. Use great resources like social media and Nextdoor.com to advertise the group and the work you are doing.

Keep Goals Fresh

- Members should meet regularly to develop new goals. Community watch groups that begin in order to respond to some immediate threat (i.e. increase in auto thefts) will fade away when that specific problem is resolved. Consistent engagement, shared goals, and connection with your Community Resource Office will keep the group going.
- Consider other goals beyond home security and watching for suspicious activity:
 - Sponsoring community cleanups
 - Finding solutions to local traffic problems
 - Collecting donations for those in need
 - Organizing after-school activities for youth
 - Tutoring youth having trouble in school
 - Formulating and bringing ideas and concerns to policy makers

Successful Meetings

- Seat everyone in a semi-circle. It enhances eye contact and encourages better interaction among members of the group as well as the Community Resource Officer.
- Provide inexpensive refreshments. Try asking attendees to bring items.
- Be sure to have a specific purpose for each meeting and an agenda. Flexibility is necessary but do not allow members to ramble. It takes away from the purpose of the meeting.
- Briefly review key points discussed at the last meeting.
- No meeting should last longer than 60 minutes and should start on time.

Consistent Communication

- Exchanging basic information with trusted neighbors: phone numbers, email addresses, daily routine of your family, planned vacations or visitors, scheduled deliveries and repairs, and your alarm system.
- Keep neighbors informed of houses that will be unoccupied for extended periods of time. Look after neighbor's houses when they are away- volunteer to collect their mail, newspapers and other deliveries.
- Report any unusual or suspicious activities to the police department. **Don't hesitate to call; there is a direct connection between an increase in calls for service and a reduction in crime!**

RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY:

*If you detect and suspicious activity in your neighborhood or anywhere, call 911. Do not worry about being embarrassed – if it is suspicious to you then it is suspicious to someone else. **Let the police apprehend criminals. Never put yourself in danger!***

Recognizing

Suspicious Persons

- Door to door canvassers especially if subjects enter the back or side yard. A legitimate canvasser will stay at the front door and in the front yard.
- Someone tampering with a residence, vehicle, business, etc.
- A person running especially if he or she is carrying something of value. They may be fleeing the scene of a crime.
- A person carrying property if it is not wrapped as it just purchased and during an unusual hour or unusual place.

Suspicious Situations Involving Property

- A large amount or unusual accumulations of property such as TVs, bicycles, car parts, etc. and they are not being used.
- Property being removed from or being placed in vehicle or buildings at odd hours or if the property is known to be vacant.

Other Unusual Situations

- Continuous repair operations at a non-business location. It is possible that stolen property is being stripped, refinished or altered in some other way.
- Broken windows or doors at closed businesses or residences where the owners are absent.
- Unusual noises – gunshots, screaming, sounds of fighting, abnormally barking dogs – anything which suggests foul play or illegal activity.
- Large number of people/vehicles frequently at a home and for short periods of time.

Suspicious Vehicles

- Slow moving vehicles without lights on which seem to be following no deliberate path.
- Certain parked, occupied vehicles – This situation is especially significant if observed at an unusual hour in a commercial area.
- Abandoned vehicles – may be stolen and dumped in that area.
- Persons attempting to forcibly enter a vehicle, especially at night or in parking lots.

Reporting- *Do not personally confront the situation. Await the arrival of the police officer.*

If any of the above situations deemed suspicious are observed, the citizen is advised to call 911 to report:

- Identify yourself by name and address
- When reporting the incident include:
 - What happened
 - Where
 - When
 - If anyone was injured
 - License plate of the vehicle
 - Description of the vehicle
 - Description of the persons
 - Direction of flight

In an emergency you may be asked to repeat information to ensure accuracy for the responding officer. While this is being done an officer has already been dispatched. All information that may identify the caller, the victim or the witness is kept confidential.

Police Response:

If the crime is in progress your call will be answered immediately. If the crime has already been committed a slower response should be expected. The first priority in answering calls is for crimes in progress. Once these calls have been answered, the officer will go to the requested location.