

A Planning Guide for Neighborhood Watch

Mt. Juliet Police Department



In today's world we must learn to stand together to fight against injustice. We must recognize that crime and criminals are a threat to us all. Only then, can we join together and stand united against the threat and only then will we notice change!

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A Planning Guide for

Neighborhood Watch

A Project of: The Mt. Juliet Police Department's Community Policing Unit

Table of Contents

Page Three	What is Neighborhood Watch?
Page Four	The Neighborhood Watch Concept
Page Five	How to start a Neighborhood Watch group
Page Six	The First Meeting
Page Seven	The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator
Page Eight	The Block Captain
Page Nine	The Neighborhood Watch Members
Page Ten	The Kick Off Day

What is Neighborhood Watch?

- ◆ It is a proven fact that a functional Neighborhood Watch in your area can reduce crime rates and improve the quality of life for your neighborhood.

Police Departments across the country are learning that community participation in anti-crime programs is essential. One of the most effective ways to promote citizen interaction with police is the sharing of information. Citizen groups determine specific needs or problems, and share the information with local police. Then, the police act on the information and report back to the group on their progress. Also, this program increases communication with the community and police department. It allows the department to organize meetings and groups to discuss crime problems in the community. In addition, crime prevention and crime activities can be discussed with the organization.

The Neighborhood Watch Concept

- ◆ The Neighborhood Watch concept is designed to target specific geographical areas and assist citizens in these areas to:
 1. Establish an organizational structure and create an information sharing network
 2. Help to introduce neighbors and create social ties that will help them work together
 3. Allow police to train citizens on how to be proactive by preventing crime and how to recognize & report criminal activity
 4. Access information and assistance from police and other government agencies that can help improve the neighborhood's quality of life
 5. Provide the community with a strong unified voice to inform community leaders on programs and actions that the community supports

A Neighborhood Watch group is not just a strong tool to fight crime; it is also a strong social organization. The watch group can be used to enact other projects, such as: community clean up, bus stop safety watch for children, and locating and assisting citizens with special needs.

- ◆ Neighborhood Watch is not a vigilante organization. It promotes awareness techniques and reporting crime, not physical confrontation of criminals.

How to start a Neighborhood Watch group

◆ Step One

1. Discuss interest in organizing a Neighborhood Watch with your neighbors. You will want to obtain the name, address, and phone numbers of all interested neighbors.
2. Obtain a map of your neighborhood area and clearly define the boundaries for your watch area (If you do not have enough interest, start small. You can always add to your watch area).
3. Distribute a flyer and go door-to-door to let people in your neighborhood have input on this project.

◆ Step Two

1. Being to plan your first Neighborhood Watch meeting.
2. Call the Mt. Juliet Police Department's Community Policing unit, and schedule a date, time, & location for the meeting.
 - It is important to contact the police department in advance because the schedules are generally filled weeks in advance of upcoming activities.
 - When selecting a location for the meeting, it is best to hold the meeting close to your neighborhood. Local churches and schools are usually very cooperative.
3. Advertise for the meeting. This is very important, and you must be creative with handouts and make personal invites to let everyone know the details on the meeting.
4. Distribute a flyer and go door-to-door to let people in your neighborhood have input on this project and invite them to the first Neighborhood Watch meeting

- ◆ Take a moment to catch your breath. You should be proud that you are a part of such a very great community.

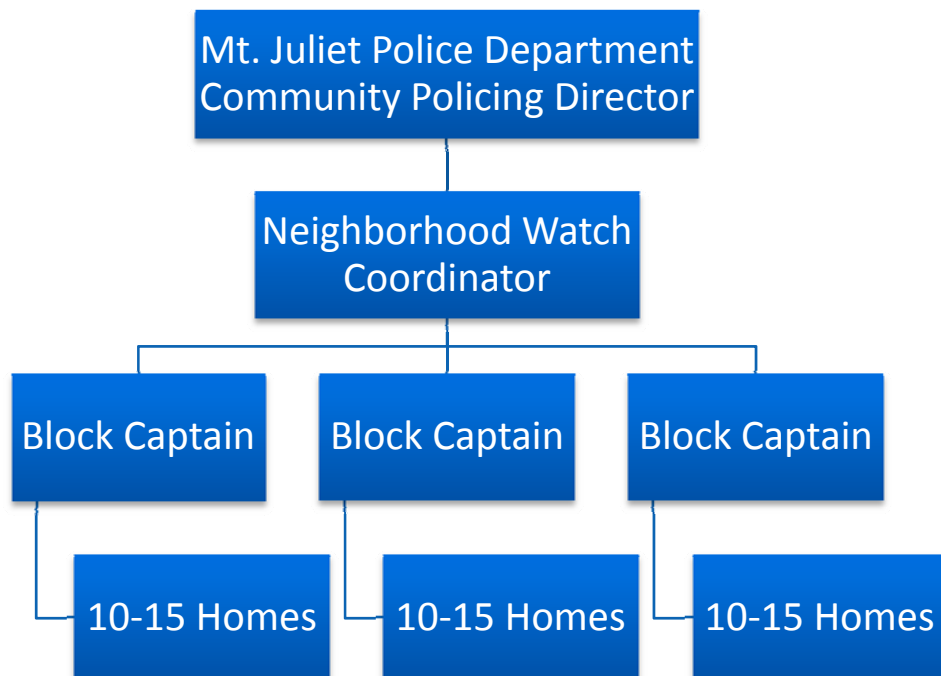
The First Meeting

The first meeting is basically a social event and an information sharing time. Everyone should sign-in at the beginning of the meeting, and contact information should be collected during that time. The Community Policing Unit, who will be speaking to your group, will tell you about the Mt. Juliet Police Department, the resources available to your community, and how Neighborhood Watch is beneficial.

- ◆ The primary goal of the first meeting is to gage or estimate the expected participation in the program, and it will help create an understanding for the need for Neighborhood Watch.

After the first meeting, you will need to establish a date for the second meeting and arrange for the Community Policing Unit to attend this meeting. At the second meeting, you will need to begin selecting the NHW coordinator and block captains. The NHW Coordinator will act as the director of the neighborhood's program, and the block captains will represent the residents. One block captain should only represent 10-15 homes.

Neighborhood Watch Hierarchy



The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator

◆ The NHW Coordinator is responsible for 3 main tasks:

1. The NHW Coordinator is the primary contact with the police department. The Coordinator passes non-emergency information from the NHW directly to the Community Policing Unit. The Coordinator will also receive information from the Community Policing Unit to pass along to the block captains.
2. The NHW Coordinator organizes the date, time and location for NHW meetings and for information sharing meetings with the block captains.
3. The NHW Coordinator reviews tips and information on suspected criminal activities within the neighborhood area and looks for patterns for potential suspects. This information is received from block captains who create written documentation of suspicious activities.

The Block Captain

- ◆ The Block Captain is the primary link in the NHW Hierarchy. There should be no more than 10-15 homes assigned to a block captain. The duties include a wide range of simple tasks, that include:
 1. Block Captains meet with each resident in their assigned block and offer to register them in the NHW.
 2. Block Captains maintain an emergency contact list of all the assigned residents. The contact list includes the phone number of the resident, cell of number of each party living in the resident, and a person who reside outside the neighborhood that can be contacted in an emergency.
 3. The Block Captain must provide his or her contact information with each of their assigned residents, and are to be available to pass on information about criminal activity in the area. Note: You may be called late by your residents.
 4. When information is received by the watch members, the Block Captain will forward it to the NHW Coordinator. When information is received from the NHW Coordinator, the Block Captain will active the phone tree and pass the information to the watch members.
 - The Phone Tree involves calling watch members and informing them if there is an active incident going on in the area.
 5. In addition, the Block Captain coordinates assistance programs if there are any special needs in the area and may set up social events for their members to become involved in.

The Neighborhood Watch Members

- ◆ The most important part of a NHW are the members. Being a NHW member is not a hard or time consuming job. It mostly involves becoming aware of activities in your neighborhood area and taking the time to report suspicious activity.
 1. NHW members observe and report any suspicious activities. Members report the non-emergency, suspicious activities to their Block Captain by phone. When a crime has occurred, members should call the Mt. Juliet Police Department (615.754.2550) to report it. Emergencies or crimes in progress should be reported immediately to the police department via 911. After the crime has been report, the information should be relayed to their Block Captain.
 2. NHW members should be willing to serve as an acting Block Captain in the absence of a Block Captain or to assist Block Captains with projects on their block.
 3. NHW members should learn their neighbor's names and be able to recognize them in their vehicles.
 4. NHW members should keep a personal block map and telephone tree in an easy accessible place and continue to update the information as it changes.
 5. NHW members should attend NHW meetings.
 6. NHW members need to properly identify all of their property by engraving their TN Drivers License numbers on the property. This is a part of the Operation ID initiative.
 7. NHW members should teach children about crime prevention about respecting law enforcement officers.
 8. NHW member should not take any risks to prevent crime or trying to make an arrest. It is best to be a good witness and remember all information about a crime or suspicious activity.
 - The Phone Tree involves calling watch members and informing them if there is an active incident going on in the area.

The Kick Off Day

- ◆ After the first meeting and when your group has finished the initial organizing, you need to have a day to officially start the NHW, which is the Kick Off Day.

To begin, we recommend that you pick a weekend or evening when everyone in the new NHW program will be invited to a special event, such as a Block Party or community rally. Try to have the meeting outside, but within the boundaries of your NHW area. This will draw attention and publicize the NHW group, and it will encourage more participation.

It is important to invite your city district commissioner, mayor and police department to your kick off, if possible. This will give you a chance to meet and tell them about your community problems and make special requests. In addition, you may want to invite the media to cover your NHW kick off event. This is a great way to let everyone know in the community on your crime prevention initiatives and how your neighborhood is fighting back against crime.

Finally, at the kick off event, you may want to unveil or plant your NHW street signs. These signs are purchased by your NHW group and should be placed on private property near the beginning, middle, and end of your watch area. Signs can be purchased through the National Neighborhood Watch Institute via internet at www.nnwi.org.

Let's Review

1. Discuss the need for the NHW in your area with neighbors.
2. Map out and determine the area for your NHW.
3. Contact the Mt. Juliet Police Community Policing Unit to coordinate the NHW.
4. Secure a place and time for the first meeting.
5. Advertise the meeting in your NHW area.
6. Have the first meeting.
7. After the meeting, begin selecting the NHW Coordinator and Block Captains.
8. The Coordinator should call a meeting with the Block Captains to plan which form you will use to register the members and to select a target date for the Kick Off.
9. Block Captains should make contact and attempt to register every home on their block.
10. Compile a complete master list off all participants in your NHW.
11. Plan the kick off meeting and invite members and guests.
12. Have the kick off meeting.
13. Continue to work with the police department to reduce crime and build community relations.