

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH BLOCK CAPTAIN'S MANUAL



TAKE A BITE OUT OF
CRIME



For further information
on personal safety
contact the
Crime Prevention Unit
of the
Joliet Police Department
at 724-3124.

crimeprevention@jolietcity.org

Joliet Police Department

"Working with the Community for a Safe City"

Purpose

The purpose of the Block Captain's Manual is to outline some of the guidelines and responsibilities of leadership in the Neighborhood Watch Program to insure a successful program. Each Block Captain and his assistant should read the complete contents of the Manual, and become familiar with it.

A Need for Neighborhood Watch

The American way of life is changing rapidly in the United States. Americans don't know their neighbors as well as they once did. Neighborhoods are no longer social institutions linking entire families into single community. The front porch has disappeared and the family has moved its social activities to the back yard – often behind tall fences. As our cities grow, we all seek more and more privacy. That privacy – that move from the front porch to the secure back yard – has had its price.

The security and safety that old neighborhoods and communities provided, disappeared years ago in the big cities. Social changes now coming to rural and suburban America are eroding the institutions that once protected our families and homes.

Objectives of Neighborhood Watch

The Neighborhood Watch Program was instituted to restore the security of our neighborhoods, and focus on reducing burglaries and vandalism. It is designed to bring citizens into action to protect their own property, and cooperate with their local law enforcement officials in community action Crime Prevention Programs.

The primary objectives of Neighborhood Watch groups are to:

- A. Maintain a cooperative system of surveillance over one another's property, children etc
- B. Report suspicious activity or crimes in progress to the police – accurately and immediately.
- C. Mutually assist and encourage the accomplishment of home security inspections, and property marking activities. by all neighborhood residents.
- D. Maintain a continuing system for the dissemination of educational materials relative to self-protection and criminal awareness and adjust the program emphasis in accordance with the most current of this information.
- E. Encourage citizens to come forward as witnesses.
- F. Help elderly or debilitated citizens and children to protect themselves against criminal victimization.

Block Captains

Crime Prevention or crime reduction resulting from the Neighborhood Watch Program depends largely upon the efforts and commitment of the participating law enforcement agency and the citizens they serve. The Neighborhood Watch Program can only make ideas, plans, and materials available to you. The action programs are yours.

The Block Captain is the mainstay of the Program. The enthusiasm and interest he/she displays will determine the success or failure of the individual program. The Block Captain is selected by the group and not the sponsoring agency. Once selected, the Block Captain becomes the liaison between the Neighborhood Watch group and the local Police Department. The position is one of extreme importance but requires only about sixty (60) minutes additional time

per month, and at the discretion of the group can be changed every six (6) months, if desired.

Block Captain's Responsibilities

The Block Captain's basic responsibilities were discussed during the Neighborhood Watch presentations, however, his/her duties do not have to be that limited. Each neighborhood program can be designed to the needs of your area. The responsibilities of the Block Captain can be expanded to any degree. Some of the Block Captain's responsibilities are explained as follows

1. Acts as liaison between the watch group and the sponsoring agency. Any problems or important information that surfaces, he/she should make contact with the agency.
2. Gathers information from watch participants on suspicious activities occurring within the Watch Block area, and turns it into the Patrol Supervisor or Area Officer.
3. Disseminates information received from the sponsoring agency to all the participants of his/her watch group.
4. Monitors the visual deterrents (decals, signs, etc) of his/her Neighborhood Watch, and makes recommendations to the participants for improving them.
5. Selects a reception committee to contact new homeowners moving into the watch area for the purpose of explaining the Neighborhood Watch Program, and inviting their participation in it.
6. Correlates arrangements for house-sitting when a participant resident is out of town.

NOTE: House-sitting by the Watch Group is more effective than requesting a property watch by police.

7. Takes the lead in arranging monthly/quarterly group meetings for the purpose of exchanging information, discussing problems, or just socializing (encourage communication among watch members)
8. May organize a citizen patrol within the group, for expanded watch coverage. **NOTE:** A citizen patrol should be for greater visibility only. Intervention into problem areas is **NOT RECOMMENDED**. Police assistance should be sought in this area.
9. May organize a youth escort service within the group, to assist elderly or handicapped participants.
10. May organize a block parent program or establish a designated block parent, as a place of refuge for any child in trouble or need of immediate assistance.
11. Should ascertain if watch participants have executed the security recommendations made by the sponsoring agency, and should encourage them to do so if they have not (A chain is only as strong as its weakest link)
12. Should ascertain if his/her watch participants have marked all their household property with the electric marking tool, and should encourage them to do so if they have not.
13. Should attempt to maintain a good positive spirit among the watch participants.
14. In the event a Block Captain moves from the watch area, a special meeting should be called (prior to his/her leaving) to select a new Captain. The new Captain should be thoroughly trained in his/her responsibilities.

A Neighborhood Watch group is only limited by its imagination. Added success can be accomplished by expanding your program. Each area within the city has different individual problems, and your Neighborhood Watch can be designed to fit your needs.

Participant Responsibilities

All of your block participants were schooled as to their role in the Neighborhood Watch Program, however it is possible that they may have become confused because of the large amount of information covered in such a short time. Some of their responsibilities are listed as follows:

1. Ensure that all the security recommendations covered in the film handouts, etc are completed in your individual home. Ask your Block Captain to inspect your premises upon completion.
2. Complete the identification marking of your household. This includes vehicles, boats, tools, and all other property.
3. Record serial and marked identification numbers on a property sheet, and place it in a secure area for possible future needs. Provide a copy to your insurance carrier.
4. Ensure that you conduct your observations (watch) and it is completed, and any necessary information is recorded **YOU SHOULD CONDUCT YOUR WATCH BY GOING TO YOUR FRONT YARD.** This provides for greater visibility on your part, and any neighborhood intruder becomes aware of you and feels that his/her actions are being watched.
5. Ensure that any suspicious information you have recorded is turned into your Block Captain. This information will be picked up by the Police Department for investigation purposes.

6. In the event you will be away from your residence at your scheduled watch time, make arrangements with your neighbor to cover that time. This will ensure that the schedule is not broken (this is for groups with Citizen Patrol).
7. During an extended leave or vacation, have one or two neighbors watch your house. Advise your Block Captain of your absence and also who will be watching your home.
NOTE: House-sitting by a neighbor is much more effective than a Police Property Watch.
8. Serve on any reception committee to call on new home owners moving into the watch area. This call is to explain the Neighborhood Watch Program and invite participation.
9. Attend monthly/quarterly group meetings to discuss problems, exchange information, or just socialize. Participate in communicating with other Neighborhood Watch participants.
NOTE: Neighborhood Watch block parties are encouraged.
10. Act as a block parent for a specified time to provide refuge for any child that is in need of immediate help.
11. Participate in citizen patrol (if adopted by the group) to ensure increased coverage in the watch area

Factors Relating to Neighborhood Watch Failure

There are several factors that contribute to the failure of the individual Neighborhood Watch Program.

The Block Captains directly influence each of these factors in a positive or negative way. The main causes of watch failures are listed as follows

1. Failure to accomplish the suggested security recommendations by all members of a watch group. (Deadbolts, pins, braces, etc)
2. Failure to mark all property with the engraver by all members of a watch group. Social Security/Driver's Lic #)
3. Insufficient communication between watch participants and the Block Captain, and watch participants with other watch members.
4. Lack of the follow-up meetings with the Neighborhood Watch Group. (information exchange, discussions, or socializing.)
5. Discontinued interest by individual participants because of apparent inactivity in the neighborhood. **(inactivity indicates success.)**

The Block Captain can exert influence in each and every one of these areas. He/she should continually spot check, inquire and call additional meetings to enhance the program and maintain enthusiasm.

Aids to Enhance Your Programs

The Crime Prevention Unit of the Joliet Police Department is interested in your program, and have available some aids that can assist You. Some of these include:

1. Additional signs for Neighborhoods. Steel Signs for special purposes to enhance Neighborhood Watch Visibility. (i.e. Neighborhood Watch, Handicap/ Hearing impaired and Posted Speed Signs.
2. Meeting Forms. Used by Block Captains to call meetings for information exchange, problem solving or socializing.
3. Self Protection Pamphlets or Programs. To establish additional assistance in Protecting one's self (Personal Safety, Senior Citizen and Children's Safety Awareness, Violence in the Work Place, Road Rage; and also Drug and Gang Awareness Programs are Available.
4. Neighborhood Watch Member's Handbooks. A general guide outlining the responsibilities of each watch participant.

Block Captains are encouraged to be Pro-Active in their Neighborhood Watch Programs. The listed aids are Available for your use and may be picked up at the Joliet Police Department's Crime Prevention Section.

Setting Up Block Parties

One of the best ways of maintaining communication with all members and meeting new residents is through a Neighborhood Block Party or Barbecue. Close off a street in your Community and Party, it's that Simple.

1. Plan your date in advance.
2. Inform all the Residence of Your intentions (It's good to have 95% of the residents agree to close off the Street in Question.).
3. Obtain a Permit from the City of Joliet (Business License Division). The Application must furnish the Time, Date, Location and the Means of the Street Closure.
The Application must be in the office two weeks in advance.
Please contact (815) 724-3905 for more information.
4. Road barricades must be in place throughout the event.



JOLIET POLICE PHONE NUMBERS



"WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY FOR A SAFE CITY"

- POLICE OR FIRE EMERGENCY** **9-1-1**
IF YOU NEED THE POLICE OR FIRE DEPARTMENT RIGHT AWAY
- NON-EMERGENCY** **726-2491**
TO REQUEST A SQUAD OR TO MAKE A COMPLAINT
- N.O.P.T.** **724-3230**
NEIGHBORHOOD ORIENTED POLICING TEAM
- TACTICAL UNIT** **724-3240**
TO REPORT GANG ACTIVITY
- INVESTIGATION DIVISION** **724-3020**
JUVENILE INVESTIGATION / TO CHECK ON AND THE STATUS OF A CASE
- D.A.R.E. UNIT** **724-3278**
DRUG AWARENESS EDUCATION
- CRIME STOPPERS** **740-2200**
TO REPORT INFORMATION ON CRIMES & REMAIN ANONYMOUS
- NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
& CRIME PREVENTION** **724-3124**
crimeprevention@jolietcity.org
- JOLIET I-SEARCH** **724-3020**
TO CHECK ON STATUS OF RUNAWAY / MISSING JUVENILE AND MISSING ADULTS
- TRAFFIC SECTION** **724-3010**
TO REPORT ABANDONED VEHICLES, CHECK STATUS OF HIT & RUN
ACCIDENTS, AND TRAFFIC INFORMATION
- POLICE RECORDS INFORMATION DESK** **724-3100**
TO OBTAIN COPIES OF POLICE REPORTS AND ALL OTHER
POLICE INFORMATION