

BLOCK CAPTAINS GUIDE



CRIME PREVENTION OFFICE

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Welcome:

The key to any successful Crime Prevention Program requires citizen involvement working together with their local police department.

Thank you for volunteering as a Neighborhood Watch Block Captain. Your main role in this capacity is to serve as a liaison between your neighbors and the police department. It has been demonstrated time and time again that communities that work together with the police department have the most success at maintaining low levels of criminal activity in low crime areas and reducing crime significantly in areas where there is more criminal activity.

It is indeed my pleasure to live and work in a community that has a high level of volunteerism as demonstrated by your involvement with us. Working together, we can continue to raise our families in a relatively secure environment and ensure that the quality of life as we know it will be enjoyed by the generations to come.

Sincerely,

Kevin Wilkinson
Police Chief

Block Captain's Responsibilities

A Neighborhood Watch's effectiveness depends heavily on its leaders. As Block Captain for your Neighborhood Watch, your duties are:

- Be the spokesperson for your group.
- Serve as the liaison between the Crime Prevention Unit of the Neenah Police Department and your Neighborhood Watch group.
- Organize and arrange Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- Maintain a master list of all members in your group.
- Instruct members on their responsibilities.
- Designate work assignments.
- Develop and implement other programs.

Spokesperson

As Block Captain you will be expected to be the spokesperson for your group, just as any head of any organization would be. Since Neighborhood Watch meetings are informal and are attended by your neighbors, it is not necessary that you be an accomplished public speaker.

Liaison

It will be your job to keep the Crime Prevention unit of the Neenah Police Department informed as to the activities and progress of your group. Any problems or questions from members of your group should be channeled to the Police Department through you. You may be asked to attend area or citywide meetings, where information and discussion will be provided for you to take back to your group.

Organize Meetings

You should schedule regular meetings of your Neighborhood Watch group. Members of your group should share the responsibility for actual hosting the meetings, but as the Block Captain, it is your job to see that arrangements are made for those meetings.

Membership List

A master list of all members of your group should be maintained by the Block Captain. Make sure that the list is accurate and up-to-date.

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 and traffic flow patterns. 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. Suggestions for specific group activities and programs are outlined later.

Designate Work Assignments

Depending on your level of organizational skills and the amount of time available to you, you may want to delegate some duties to other members of the group. Some examples of duties that you may want to delegate to other members are:

- New member recruitment
- Fund raising
- Secretarial duties
- Developing and maintaining block maps
- Writing and distributing newsletters and other materials

Member Responsibilities

Part of your job as Block Captain is to make sure that all members of your Neighborhood Watch group understand what is expected of them. Remember, the success of any Neighborhood Watch program is dependent on the active involvement of its members. You should make sure that all members are aware that their basic duties include:

- Be suspicious. Report unusual or suspicious behavior to the Police Department IMMEDIATELY. Write down descriptions of the person(s) and license numbers of any vehicles involved.
- Keep a trusted neighbor informed if your home will be unoccupied for an extended period. It is important to leave a way of contacting you if an emergency should arise.
- Look after your neighbor's house when they are away, and ask them to look after yours. This includes collecting mail, newspapers, and other deliveries, which would indicate that no one is home.
- Attend meetings of your Neighborhood Watch group.
- Above all, be concerned. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe.
- REMEMBER, your job is to REPORT crime. The responsibility for apprehending criminals belongs to the police.

Maps and Information

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

- Clearly identified streets and cross-streets.
- Show the name, address, and phone number of each home.
- Include emergency numbers for the Police and Fire Departments and Ambulance.
- This information must be kept up to date, reflecting any changes in residents, phone numbers, etc.

Knowing your neighbor's basic habits and belongings will help you to recognize unusual or suspicious activity. Basic information which should be exchanged between members includes:

- ***Home and work phone numbers***
- Number, ages, and names of family members.
- Work hours.
- School hours of children.
- Number and types of vehicles.
- Who has dogs and other pets.
- Planned vacations or visitors.
- Scheduled deliveries such as newspapers, etc.
- Any other helpful information.

Suggested Programs

Home Security Survey – The Crime Prevention Coordinator of the Neenah Police Department will conduct free home security surveys, designed to help residents decrease the chances of a burglary. Encourage members to contact the Department to make an appointment for an officer to come to their home and conduct the survey.

Operation I.D. – This program is designed to reduce the likelihood that member's property will be stolen, and to aid in its recovery in the event that it is. You can do this by simply recording the serial numbers of your property and keeping those numbers in a safe place, or engravers are available by the Neenah Police Department so that members can mark their property with their driver's license number.

Crime Awareness – Law enforcement experts and community leaders can be called upon to participate in Neighborhood Watch meetings to discuss a variety of topics. Some of these topics include:

- Home safety
- Personal safety tips
- Vehicle protection
- Understanding the criminal justice system
- Child abuse
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Crime Stoppers reward tip line
- Crime in schools
- Child safety
- Identify theft, fraud, and other types of crimes

Multiple Family Units – Multiple family units, apartment buildings, and condominium units may require special programs geared to the physical structure of the building(s) itself. It is not necessary that an entire building or complex be included in a Neighborhood Watch group. One floor of one building, for example, may want to organize as a "block." Special requirements for lighting, security devices, use of common areas, and other problems inherent to multiple family units should be discussed with a member of the Neighborhood Watch Team of the Neenah Police Department.

Block Captain DO's and DON'TS

DO

1. Have knowledge of Police Department procedures. Example: A neighbor calls the police about a loud party and is upset because police have not arrived yet. They contact you and complain. You can explain that emergency calls take priority and police will respond as soon as possible.
2. Have a willingness to delegate tasks and listen to others opinions.
3. Solicit members to attend meetings.
4. Monitor crime trends and problem areas in your neighborhood.
5. Inform your Crime Prevention Officer if your phone number changes.
6. Inform neighbors of your responsibility as a Block Captain.

DON'T

1. Use your position in an attempt to receive any form of special consideration from any police department employee.
2. Act in the capacity of a police officer in any way.
3. Attempt to handle a situation in any way, which may be hazardous to themselves or others.
4. Use your group to harass or discriminate against any individual or group of people.