

**CHARLOTTE
MECKLENBURG
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**NEIGHBORHOOD
WATCH**

CMPD Crime Prevention Unit
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NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Neighborhood watch is a *crime prevention* program that enlists the active participation of residents in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime, solve problems, and improve the quality of life in your area.

WARNING SIGNS

- Abandoned vehicles
- Vacant houses
- Writing graffiti
- Vandalism
- Littering
- Loitering
- Underage Smoking & Drinking
- Joyriding
- Prostitution
- Residential break-ins
- Robbery from person
- Assault (Verbal & Physical)
- Aggravated assault
- Drug dealing

PEOPLE ARE RELUCTANT TO GET INVOLVED

I. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCE THE WAY A PERSON WILL ACT.

- A. Gender
- B. Age
- C. Health
- D. Ethnicity & Culture
- E. Fear of retaliation
- F. Frequent incivility in community
- G. Lack solidarity in community
- H. Psychological
 - 1. Believe they have nothing to offer
 - 2. Believe things cannot change
- I. Lack confidence in Law Enforcement

The way a person chooses to perceive an event will define what significance the event represents to them. What one person perceives as a “*tragedy*” can appear to another person as an “*opportunity for change*”. The consequences on an event can be emotional, psychological, physical, financial, social and spiritual. Depending on the severity, the impact will affect not only the victim, but their family, friends, neighbors and the entire community.

II. FEAR OF CRIME: REALITY VS. PERCEPTION

- A. How likely is it that you will become a crime victim?
- B. Do you read the newspaper and watch the news?
- C. Do you discuss current events with your family and friends?
- D. Have you ever heard a story that left you feeling as though you knew them?

The “fear of crime” refers to the fear of being a victim of crime opposed to the actual probability of being a victim of crime. Hearing about events, knowing people who have been victimized, can raise a person’s level of anxiety towards crime and their risk of victimization. When the level of anxiety is proportionate with reality, people are more likely to take positive steps towards reducing their chances of victimization. However, when the level of fear is disproportionate with reality, it can affect a person’s psychological well-being. The

disparity can cause people to alter their lifestyle in an attempt to avoid the “problems”. It can also create a sense of mistrust and cohesion within the community, which impacts their stability.

The disparity between perception and reality can also be attributed to the media’s response to crime. We live in a “need to know” society where we are surrounded with media outlets (i.e.: newspaper, television, radio, internet, blogs, message boards, and pod cast) everywhere we turn. There is no doubt our perceptions are shaped by what the media deems as newsworthy. Often time news reports read like a police blotter, which lacks real content. In some instances, the “sensationalistic” attributes of an event or the sheer volume of coverage can be misleading. Thus, inaccurate/inappropriate attitudes, assumptions, labels, or stereotypes are created, which lead people to fear certain communities. This fear can hinder future investments and services being devoted to the community. It also creates a sense of isolation and a devalued self-image for those living in the community.

GETTING NEIGHBORS TOGETHER

Implementing a Neighborhood Watch program is a great way to bring the community together. When people establish a relationship with their community, they are more likely to share information, look out for their neighbors’ families and property, work together to resolve conflict, and to improve conditions within the community. This is a simple and cost effective way for the community, residents and police department to collaborate in an effort to bring about change. Participation in the program is open to any person (i.e.: young or old, single or married, renter or homeowner, and etc.) concerned about or has a vested interest in the neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

I. CHAIRPERSON

- A. Liaison between community and police department
- B. Recruit volunteers
- C. Be prepared to respond to comments or negative attitudes
- D. Remain focused and your efforts will bring about change

II. BLOCK CAPTAIN

- A. Responsible for sharing information
- B. Liaison between their neighbors and Chairperson
- C. Educate new residents about the NW program
- D. Maintain and update contact information for their neighbors
- E. Recruit volunteers for community projects

III. RESIDENTS

- A. Attend community meetings
- B. Get to know your neighbors
- C. Volunteer your time
- D. Be aware of your surroundings and report unusual/suspicious activities
- E. Take ownership of your safety and property
- F. Trust your instincts and respond appropriately

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

- I. STRONG LEADERSHIP
 - A. Politically active and astute
 - B. Working knowledge of city government
 - C. Aware of zoning and rezoning request
 - D. Aware of locations applying for alcohol permits
- II. COMMUNICATE WITH NEIGHBORS REGULARLY
 - A. Newsletter/flyer
 - B. Neighborhood website
 - C. Message board
 - D. Phone tree
 - E. Face-to-face
 - F. Translate correspondences into other languages if appropriate
- III. PLAN FOR THE FUTURE
 - A. Recognize residents for their commitment
 - B. Identify and utilize the talents/skills of the residents
 - C. Cultivate future Neighborhood Leaders
 - D. Welcome new residents and discuss community expectations
- IV. STRONG COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
 - A. Educate and encourage neighbors to get involved
 - 1. Report City Code violations/infractions in timely manner
 - 2. Report disabled vehicles and vehicles parked on the lawn
 - 3. Report suspicious/criminal behavior immediately
 - B. Take pride in the community
 - 1. Neighbors take responsibility for their property
 - 2. Neighbors use appropriate fixtures/furniture outside
 - 3. Schedule bulky item pick up before placing at the curb
 - C. Assess infrastructure needs
 - 1. Lighting
 - 2. Dilapidated structures
 - 3. Streets, sidewalks, landscaping
 - 4. Traffic control signals and signage
 - 5. Speed humps and barricades

BENEFITS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

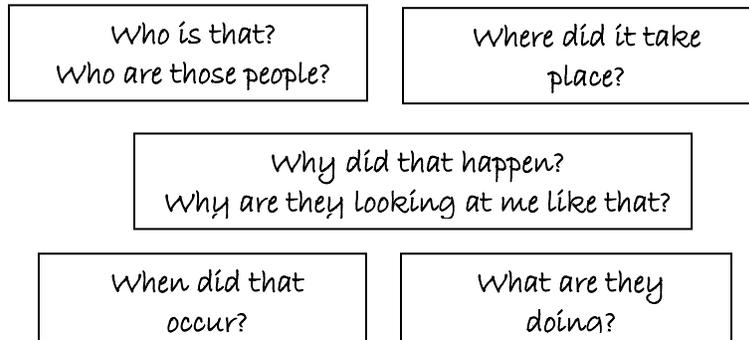
- A. Establish a partnership with CMPD
- B. Reduce the fear of crime
- C. Improve the quality of life
- D. Learn how to identify and report suspicious activity
- E. Create a sense of unity among the community
- F. Community accepts responsibility for their neighborhood
- G. Establish goals (short and long term)

IDENTIFYING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Trust your instincts! Use your best judgment when determining what to do with the information you have. Suspicious activity exists in varying degrees. Therefore, the responses to the activity will exist in varying degrees. If you find it difficult to decide what action to take, call 911 and let them help you determine the best way to proceed.

Through awareness, education, and experience, you will be able to determine what *Suspicious Activity* means to you.

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY IS ANY SITUATION, OBJECT, OR PERSON THAT ATTRACTS YOUR ATTENTION AND IS NOT IMMEDIATELY EXPLAINABLE.



PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

I. IDENTIFY

A. What is the problem?

1. Larceny from auto
2. Larceny of auto
3. Residential burglaries
4. Vandalism/graffiti
5. Loitering

II. ANALYSIS

A. What are the common elements of the problem?

1. Time of day
2. Location
3. Repeat offenders
4. Targets
5. Access to targets

III. RESPONSE

- A. How can the problem be addressed?
- B. What can be done to prevent or reduce the damage if it does recur?
- C. What agencies or organizations can help in solving the problem?
- D. What are the best things to do for short- and long-term results?

IV. ASSESSMENT

- A. Did the problem go away?
- B. Was the damage reduced?
- C. If not, what else should be done?

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

YOU AND NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Neighborhood watch is neighbors working with neighbors and the police to prevent crime. The neighborhood watch program is based on the concept of people looking out for one another and to send a message to potential criminals that someone is watching every move they make.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

1. Define the area that will participate in the neighborhood watch program. The “neighborhood watch street information” sheet can be used to aid in organizing your area.
2. Select a chairperson and block captains. You may need to recruit additional Block Captains at the meeting.
3. Schedule a meeting date, time, and place: can be in a home, church, community building or school for example. Should be some place near community to be convenient for most residents.
4. Contact your CMPD division Community Coordinator or the crime prevention unit at (704)336-2310 to invite officer to the meeting. To locate the division in which you live go to <http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/CMPD/response-areas/Pages/default.aspx>. Crime Prevention officers and coordinators can help pass out flyers advertising the meeting.
5. Residents participating in the program should sign the “Neighborhood Watch Participation Roster”.
6. Once all the requirements have been met and the neighborhood watch coordinator has reviewed the paperwork, neighborhood watch signs can be purchased by the community.
7. To remain an “**active**” neighborhood watch, the community must have at least one neighborhood watch meeting a year with a Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officer in attendance.
8. To “**re-activate**” a neighborhood watch program that has become inactive, the community must follow the same steps required to start a new neighborhood watch program.

POSTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH SIGN

The installation of the neighborhood watch sign at the entrance to your community should not be a signal that your task is complete; actually, this event marks the beginning of your commitment to protecting yourself and your neighbors through the newly established neighborhood watch program. The Neighborhood Watch signs will not keep the criminals out, but it will put them on notice that you are watching. The community is responsible for the cost incurred when posting their neighborhood watch sign(s). Should the community wish to post their neighborhood watch sign(s) on an existing utility pole, they would not be in violation of the city code. According to city code §10-212 any signage “established by governmental agencies” are an exception to the ban on posting signage on utility poles or on posting signage within 11 feet of the edge of the pavement.

ACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Neighborhood watch participants are the extra eyes and ears for reporting crime and helping neighbors. They help build pride and serve as a catalyst in efforts to address community concerns and solve problems. Participants are not asked to be vigilantes or to assume the role of the police.

MAINTAINING AN ACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

To insure that your program remains active and interest remains strong, the following suggestions should be implemented:

- It is recommended that your community set up an annual update meeting
- Plan quarterly community events (i.e.: block party, pool party, kid’s day, cookout, community yard sale and etc.)
- Send out a newsletter (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, or yearly)
- Set up an email or telephone phone information tree
- Participate in national night out, which is held the first Tuesday of August

OPERATION ID

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department **strongly** recommends that you complete an inventory of the property inside your home by recording the serial numbers on those items. Be sure to keep your records in a safe place and continue to update it when new items are purchased. Engraving personal items is also recommended. Some burglars will avoid your home if they think that your valuables are marked. Often, marked items are more difficult for criminals to sell. A more important reason to mark or engrave your property, however, is that these items are easier to identify and return to you when police recover them. When engraving follow these tips:

- Use your driver’s license number for engraving, place a star (asterisk) after the last digit; for example, NCDL 1234567*
- **Do not use social security numbers!**
- Mark the items in a prominent place that can be seen without taking anything apart
- Keep a list of all the engraved items. Store this information in a locked fireproof box, if available.

As an added measure of protection; photograph or videotape items which cannot be easily engraved or that would affect the value if a mark were placed on it (i.e. silver, jewelry, etc.)