Starting A Neighborhood Watch Group

A Neighborhood Watch Group is an organized group of neighborhood residents who network with each other and their local law enforcement. This provides many opportunities, including getting to know your neighbors and community better, information on how to recognize and report criminal and suspicious behavior, updates on the latest crime trends in your area and safety information. Your group must complete each of the below listed steps to qualify for official recognition as a Neighborhood Watch Group by the Omaha Police Department.

Select or Elect a Watch Block Captain

- This person must be willing to oversee the organization of your group and be willing to devote a minimal amount of time and effort to the group’s continued effective operation. Some of the duties of the person will be maintain a membership roster, schedule regular meetings, and be a contact for the Omaha Police Department.

Define Boundaries

- The group should decide the exact area they wish to include in their watch group. Only blocks with 60% participation will be considered for membership. It has been found that participation by less than 60% of the residents on a block makes an ineffective watch group. A block is defined as the houses on both sides of a given street from intersection to intersection. This may be waived for blocks with irregular configurations.

Maintain A Roster

- Your group must maintain a roster of all active members. This should include names, addresses and phone numbers. Work numbers should be listed where possible.

Telephone Tree

- An effective method for sharing information between neighbors is a telephone tree. Each neighbor is responsible for calling one or two other block members when problems arise. You should keep their block information in a safe, accessible place.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

- The basic premise of the Neighborhood Watch Group is to reunite the neighborhoods in close, friendly groups. The most effective way to accomplish this is to have regular get-togethers. The Omaha Police Department would like to see all of the groups meet as often as possible but, in any event, not less than once a year. These meetings do not have to center on “crime talk” but can be used to exchange ideas about all types of neighborhood problems, including crime. The Omaha Police Department must be notified that your group is meeting at least once a year in order to stay active in our files. Notification can be mailed to the Omaha Police Department, Neighborhood Services Unit, 505 South 15th St., Omaha, NE 68102 or call 402-444-5772.

Contact Your Crime Prevention Specialist

- When your group has completed each of the above steps, please have your Watch Captain contact the Crime Prevention Specialist in your precinct; NE 402-444-3367, NW 402-444-6478, SE 402-444-7743, or SW 402-444-7928. After it has been determined that your group has met all of the requirements, a Crime Prevention Specialist will attend your first meeting to certify your group and issue the Neighborhood Watch door stickers to the Watch Captain. The Crime Prevention Specialist and the Watch Captain will decide where the Neighborhood Watch signs will be located. The Crime Prevention Specialist will also arrange for sign installation.

Omaha Police Department          Phone: (402) 444-5772
Neighborhood Services Unit        POLICE.CITYOFOMAHA.ORG
A Checklist For Starting a Neighborhood Watch Program

You Will Need:

- A person or group of people committed to starting a Neighborhood Watch.
- A planning committee to initiate the program.
- A list of what issues initially need to be addressed in your community.
- A means of communicating with the residents, e.g., e-mail, social media, fliers, telephone trees.
- Publicity for the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting.
- A meeting agenda to keep things moving and on track.
- A place to meet—resident’s house, school, community center, library.
- A map of the community with spaces for names, addresses, and phone numbers of all households.
- Brochures or other materials on topics of interest to the residents.
- A sign-up sheet for those interested in becoming block or building captains.
- Facts about crime in your neighborhood. These can be found in police reports, newspapers, or by visiting a crime mapping website, such as http://www.crimemapping.com/

To Add Excitement:

- Mix business with pleasure—allow attendees time to socialize.
- Seek out neighborhood go-getters—civic leaders and elected officials—to be your advocates and mentors.
- Work with existing Neighborhood Watch Groups or similar organizations to gain insight.
- Provide speakers on topics of community interest.
- Link crime prevention into activities promoted by others groups: child protection, anti-vandalism projects, community service, arson prevention, recreation activities for young people.
- Start a neighborhood newsletter.
- Don’t forget events like National Night Out or a potluck dinner that gives neighbors a chance to get-together.

To Build Partnerships:

- The police of sheriff’s office’s endorsement is critical to a Watch Group’s credibility. These agencies are the major sources of information on local crime patterns, crime prevention education, and crime reporting.
- Local businesses and organizations can help provide fliers and a newsletter, offer meeting places, and distribute crime prevention information.
- Involve everyone—young and old, single and married, renter or homeowner.
- Libraries can provide research materials, videos, computers, and meeting space.
- Media can aid Neighborhood Watches by publicizing recruitment drives.
- Look to volunteer centers, parent groups, and labor unions for advice on recruiting volunteers.
- Places or worship can provide meeting space and a good source of volunteers.

Omaha Police Department
Neighborhood Services Unit
Phone: (402) 444-5772

505 South 15th Street
Omaha, NE  68102
POLICE.CITYOFOMAHA.ORG