
POLICE DEPARTMENT

To: New Neighborhood Watch Block Captains

From: Bobbie Williams, Neighborhood Watch Liaison
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Subject: Starting Neighborhood Watch

Thank you for your interest in helping to safeguard your community. Due to budget cuts, the Ventura Police Department lost the Crime Prevention Officer position and all associated programs, including Neighborhood Watch, in July of 2008. However, we feel strongly about the value of Neighborhood Watch and would like to assist interested groups in starting their own programs with the limited support we can offer, as detailed below.

How Can I Start A Neighborhood Watch on My Street?

1. Speak to your neighbors and find out if there is sufficient interest to start and maintain a local Neighborhood Watch group.
2. Determine what area your Watch will cover. 10-15 homes is a manageable number for one Block Captain. The homes should generally be within sight of one another.

If you want to cover a larger area, get a Co-Captain to commit for each additional group of homes.

3. Make a map of your Watch area. It can be a simple sketch, or you can use the attached form.
4. Speak to each of the residents in your area about Neighborhood Watch and collect the information on Household Data Forms for each address. There is a sample form attached, or you can use your own.

This data will help you and your neighbors recognize the vehicles and people that belong in your neighborhood. Then you can more easily determine when someone or something is suspicious and worth a second look, or even a call to the Police Department if necessary.

Some folks may be reluctant to supply this information so it shouldn't be mandatory. However, it can also be very valuable in an emergency or in the case of a disaster. Plan to update your list at least annually.

5. Schedule a Neighborhood Watch Start-up Meeting:

Choose a nearby location, ideally one of the houses or yards on your street.

Determine the date and time of your meeting.

Contact the Ventura Police Department at 339-4423 to request that an Officer who works in your area attend the meeting. He or she can answer questions about law enforcement and provide information about local crime.

Make and distribute flyers announcing your meeting to all the residences on your map. Consider providing refreshments or combining the meeting with a potluck.

Designate someone to lead your meeting and someone to take notes.

6. At Your Start-up Meeting:

Have everyone introduce themselves and share any concerns they might have about crime in the area.

Circulate a sign-in sheet so you will have record of who was there (sample attached). Then you can follow-up with those who were unable to attend.

Make sure all have had the opportunity to fill out a Household Data Form.

When the Police Officer arrives, talk to him or her about the issues that are causing concern for you and your neighbors. Take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions.

After the Officer's visit, you'll need to decide how you want to move forward as a group:

Determine who will act as Block Captain(s) for your neighborhood.
Block Captains must have e-mail access in order to receive communications from the Police Department.

Decide how many Neighborhood Watch signs you would like to request and where you would like them placed. Signs are \$12 each, many groups take up a collection at their first meeting in order to share the cost of the signs.

Establish a standard form of communication for sharing information amongst those in your Watch.

7. After Your First Meeting:

Contact Ventura Police Department at 339-4423 to arrange an appointment with our Coordinator. At that meeting you will:

Provide e-mail addresses for each of your Block Captains. We will periodically send out notification of new information that becomes available on our website and rely on Block Captains to share that information with the other members of the Watch.

Order and pay for installation of the large metal Neighborhood Watch signs for your community (\$12.00 each).

Have the opportunity to purchase Neighborhood Watch decals (\$.25 each) and placards (\$1.00 each) for individual homes.

8. In the Future:

Consider some of the following ideas for keeping interest up in your group:

- Have an annual block party, perhaps in conjunction with a holiday
- Put together a potluck or neighborhood garage sale
- Organize a neighborhood clean-up day or maybe an exercise/walkers group
- Invite the Fire Department or other guests to address your group
- Purchase Operation ID equipment as a group and make it available to all
- Do the same with solar powered/motion sensor lighting and periodically relocate them
- Contact new residents and invite them to participate
- Distribute Crime Prevention information on topics of interest
- Hold a friendly competition, holiday lights or landscape improvements etc.
- Start a neighborhood sports league, pick-up basketball etc.

And remember to access our website regularly for new information and tips to help keep your neighborhood a safe and enjoyable place to live at:

www.venturapd.org

(be sure to use the “www” or it may not work)

Be sure to bookmark it!

I hope this information is helpful to you.
We truly value our partnerships with community members and look forward to working with you.