

## **What is (is not) Neighborhood Watch**

### **Neighborhood Watch is:**

- A program designed to encourage neighbors to get to know one another and to help prevent each other from becoming a victim of crime.
- Becoming educated with today's crime trends and how to avoid becoming a victim.
- Learning to identify suspicious activity and reporting the activity to other neighbors and the Police.
- Learning and practicing Crime Prevention, through Environmental Design such as your homes security and lighting.
- Neighbors coming together to address community issues.
- A program controlled by residents of the neighborhood.

### **Neighborhood Watch is not:**

- Citizens armed patrol.
- Vigilante groups.
- Encouraging residents to take risks to prevent crimes.
- A program that guarantees that a crime will not occur in a neighborhood.
- A political group.
- A neighborhood association.
- A law enforcement entity.

## **Requirements for Maintaining Your Group**

In order for your group to be recognized by the Victoria Police Department (VPD) as an Active Neighborhood Watch, the neighborhood must meet the following criteria:

1. There must be at least 60% of the homes represented in the neighborhood. Large neighborhoods can be broken down into smaller sections, but each section must meet the requirements individually. The more people participating in the Neighborhood Watch the more effective it will be. Contact the VPD Crime Prevention Unit for eligible neighborhood breakdowns.
2. There must be a Coordinator, Coordinator Assistant, and Block Captains. This may vary depending on the size of your neighborhood. The neighborhoods should be self productive and having people to organize the meetings and events are essential.
3. All participants must participate in Operation ID. This program involves making an inventory list and marking all your property with an identifying number.
4. Hold two meetings a year with a VPD Crime Prevention Officer or designee. One meeting will be a Town Hall type meeting discussing latest crime trends and problems which will last about an hour. The other will be Crime Prevention class. There are many different topics available, contact your VPD Crime Prevention Officer for more information.

5. Participate in two social events a year; one should be National Night Out. National Night Out is a nationwide program in which neighborhoods get together to show the criminals they're not welcome. The other socials could be anything from a block party to a formal gathering. Contact the VPD Crime Prevention Unit to get help with other ideas.
6. After meeting the above criteria, your group will be given Neighborhood Watch signs at the entrances to your neighborhood. If you have the old signs (and meet the requirements) you will be given the new Neighborhood Watch signs.

These requirements need to be met each year. The social events can be as formal or informal as you like. Including block parties (most popular on National Night Out), cookouts, ice cream parties, etc... An Officer only has to attend the two meetings a year which will be held at a location big enough to support 60% or more of your neighborhood. The social events do not require an Officer to be there, but need to be reported to the VPD Crime Prevention Unit. If you want an Officer at the event just give an appropriate notice and an Officer will attend. The VPD Crime Prevention Unit recommends more social events; the more you have the more effective the group will be. I know this sounds like a lot but in reality, can be achieved in as little as five-six hours a year. The Crime Prevention Office is here to help you, but remember the Neighborhood Watch is organized and kept by the neighborhood.

## Neighborhood Watch Participant Responsibilities

### Coordinator Responsibilities:

1. Ensure your group is meeting the requirements and contacting the VPD Crime Prevention Officer.
2. Scheduling of the Neighborhood Watch meetings and events.
3. Oversee the Operation Identification program. Engravers to mark your property can be checked out for free at the Crime Prevention Office.
4. Assist in developing a neighborhood map and roster for your group that includes names, addresses, and phone numbers and e-mails for each group member (which needs to be continuously updated). Each individual listed should know who is to be contacted should an emergency or other important information need to be disseminated in a hurry.
5. Develop an alert plan reflecting the name and phone number of each household - e-mail distribution list or phone tree for notification of suspicious activity.
6. Greet new neighbors and invite them to join the program.
7. Inform and distribute to group members any crime related information received from the Police Department.
8. Be the liaison between your Neighborhood Watch group and the VPD Crime Prevention Officer.
9. Be responsible for maintaining accurate information with the VPD Crime Prevention Officer, i.e., E-mail, phone numbers and addresses.

Do not be afraid to ask for help from the Assistants or Block Captains. You can always contact your VPD Crime Prevention Officer with any questions or concerns. The VPD Crime Prevention Officer is there to help you through the Neighborhood Watch process.

**Block Captain Responsibilities:**

1. One representative for no more than twenty homes.
2. Assist the Coordinator with scheduling the Neighborhood Watch meetings and events.
3. Organize block information roster and distribute to the block. Give a copy of the roster to the Coordinator.
4. Stay in touch with your neighbors. Meet new residents as soon as possible and tell them about the program.
5. Be a liaison between the individual residents, other Block Captains and the Coordinator.

**Neighborhood Residents Responsibilities:**

1. Assist the Block Captain with gathering information and notify the Block Captain if the information Changes.
2. Learn neighbors' names and be able to identify their vehicles and other vehicles usually in your neighborhood.
3. Keep an up to date roster and other important group information in an accessible and secure location.
4. Implement security measures suggested by your VPD Crime Prevention Officer.
5. Notify the Police of any suspicious activity. Watch out for your neighbors.
6. DO NOT TAKE ANY PERSONAL RISK to prevent a crime or execute an arrest. It is more important to have a healthy, injury free witness whose recollection of the incident is not tainted by fear, anxiety, or pain. The safety and well being of every person in the group is most important.
7. Attend the Neighborhood Watch meetings and events.

Be sure to assist each other with the task at hand. Help the Coordinator with ideas for the meetings and events. You can always contact your VPD Crime Prevention Officer with any questions or concerns. The VPD Crime Prevention Officer is there to help you through the Neighborhood Watch process.