



NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCKWATCH OVERVIEW

Blockwatch is an effective way for neighborhood residents to get involved in the fight against crime.

HOW DOES BLOCKWATCH WORK?

Blockwatch establishes an organized network for residents to exchange ideas and information with their neighbors and the Westerville Division of Police. Through Blockwatch training sessions, residents learn how to become the extended eyes and ears of the police. They learn to report on suspicious or unusual activity in their neighborhoods to help police fight crime. Blockwatch participants also learn security tips for their home and personal safety tips for themselves and their families.

NOTE:

Blockwatch members are **NOT** expected to do the job of the police

The key to success in Blockwatch is community involvement. The more residents actively involved in the Blockwatch program, the more effective the Blockwatch will be. By getting to know your neighbors and fine-tuning your observation skills, you can help prevent crime in your neighborhood!

BLOCKWATCH COORDINATORS

A Block Coordinator serves a valuable role as a leader for their area Blockwatch. A Block Coordinator helps by:

1. Canvassing neighbors to explain the program, hand out information and encourage participation
2. Distributing flyers for monthly Blockwatch meetings
3. Maintaining an updated list and map of neighbors who agree to participate as Blockwatch members
4. Setting a good example for neighbors by implementing home security measures and practicing good personal safety habits
5. Welcoming new residents to their neighborhood and encouraging their participation in Blockwatch

BLOCKWATCH MEMBERS

Blockwatch members can help keep their neighborhood safe by:

1. Watching out for their neighbors and their neighbor's property
2. Notifying the police of any suspicious activity or crime in progress
3. Reporting to the police if they have been a victim of crime
4. Notifying their Block Coordinator if they have been a victim of a burglary, vandalism or other criminal activity
5. Updating security and hardware in their home
6. Marking all valuables so they can be identified if stolen
7. Attending Blockwatch meetings in their neighborhood

WHAT "SUSPICIOUS" ACTIVITY SHOULD BLOCKWATCH MEMBERS LOOK FOR?

As a Blockwatch member, here are some of the things that you would watch for:

1. Someone screaming or shouting for help
2. Sounds of breaking glass or shattering wood
3. Unusual noises
4. A beam from a flashlight or light in a neighbor's home
5. Persons going door to door at unusual hours
6. Someone looking into windows or parked cars
7. Unknown persons waiting in front of a home or loitering around the neighborhood
8. A stranger in the backyard of your house or your neighbor's
9. Property being taken out of houses where no one is at home or from a business after it has closed
10. Property being carried by persons on foot
11. Property being loaded into a vehicle or being removed from a vehicle
12. An opened or forced door or window
13. Strange vehicles parked at your neighbor's house
14. Slow moving vehicles cruising the block
15. Someone being forced into a vehicle
16. A stranger sitting in a car or stopping to talk to a child
17. Abandoned cars
18. Unusually high number of visitors to a residence

In any of these situations, you should write down the description of any suspicious person and/or vehicle in as much detail as possible. Get the model, color and license number of the vehicles if you can. Call the police and report what you have seen. Let your Blockwatch Coordinator and neighbors know if you have observed something suspicious or unusual in your neighborhood, but call the police first. The Westerville Division of Police non-emergency number is **(614) 882-7444**. In an emergency or life-threatening situation, call **9-1-1**.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BLOCKWATCH MEMBERS

The Blockwatch coordinator is the guide for the blockwatch. It is the responsibility of the coordinator to ensure that all participants are notified of upcoming block watch meetings using a phone/e-mail contact list. The coordinator will also contact the police if an officer is needed for a meeting.

1. Role of a Blockwatch Member:

In order to, maintain the sanctity of a neighborhood and the structure of a block watch, there are four objectives block watch members should practice:

- A. Be the eyes and ears of law enforcement and report suspicious activity and criminal behavior to the Westerville Division of Police.
- B. **Teamwork** - neighbors working together can solve problems.
- C. Practice personal safety and security while out in the community.
- D. Attend block watch meetings on a regular basis.

2. Organizational Structure:

Blockwatch Coordinator:

- A. Leads meetings.
- B. Coordinates information with the police.
- C. Delegates duties among captains and members.
- D. Develops agendas and finds guest speakers for meetings.

Blockwatch Member:

- A. Attends meetings.
- B. Works with other members on common goals.
- C. Looks after residences when neighbors are away.
- D. Supports the captain and coordinator in accomplishing goals.
- E. Reports suspicious and criminal activity to Police Non-Emergency #: **(614) 882-7444**

ORGANIZING A BLOCKWATCH

Once you've contacted the Westerville Division of Police for information, our Crime Prevention officer [**Officer John Jeffries – (614) 901-6472 OR john.jeffries@westerville.org**] will help you make plans for your first meeting.

Use the following suggestions to get residents interested in attending meetings and to transform your group into a successful blockwatch.

1. Neighbors can be invited by telephone or going door-to-door with flyers at least 10 days in advance. Flyer information should include the location, date, time and purpose.
2. If you distribute flyers, go with another neighbor and try to speak with residents to encourage them to come to the meeting. Ask them if they'd like a phone call as a reminder before the meeting and, if so, get their number before you leave.
3. Invite any individuals or groups in the area who would have an interest in attending. Schools and businesses, churches, civic groups and local government leaders all have an investment in the health of the community and will often become active partners with blockwatches that are working to improve their neighborhoods.
4. Survey neighbors when you invite them to the first meeting to get a sense of the concerns that they have for their area. Ask them a few brief questions then make those a part of the agenda for the meeting:
5. Draft a simple agenda and give residents a copy at the meeting. An agenda will help members focus on the issues they first raised in response to the survey. If an issue is raised that is not on the agenda, write it down for discussion at your next meeting.
6. If using a meeting area; check the room to make sure that you have what you'll need for speakers and presentations. If audio-visual equipment will be used, know how it operates before the meeting begins. Have a flip chart or blackboard, paper, markers and pens available so members can take notes.
7. Keep the meeting brief and focused. 60 to 90 minutes is a good length of time for blockwatch meetings.
8. Distribute duties so one person is not doing all the work. Divide bigger jobs into smaller tasks so that the members do not get burned out.
9. Write down the names of those attending along with addresses and day and evening telephone numbers. This list will help members stay in contact and can be used to create a phone/e-mail contact list.
10. Schedule monthly meetings and hold them on the same day

THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

With training and guidance from **Officer John Jeffries**, a blockwatch can be transformed from a group of isolated individuals into a united and committed team working on safety concerns in their neighborhood and community. He is trained to serve as the vital communication link between the Westerville Division of Police and the community.

- 1. Training:** An important role of the Crime Prevention officer is to help educate and train residents in crime prevention and offer training on topics of interest (Procedures, Personal Safety, Residential Safety, Problem-solving, etc.) to members and their specific neighborhood.
- 2. Support:** The Crime Prevention officer contributes constructive support and motivates members as they form their watch. Later, they work with members by answering questions and offering information on ways to mobilize with other community groups to achieve lasting results. Members utilize the support of the officer beyond the initial meetings as they tackle group goals.
- 3. Guidance:** The Crime Prevention officer guides members as they set up their watches and helps members focus discussions on specific ways to solve neighborhood problems and use each member's skills and talents to achieve set goals.
- 4. Leadership:** The Crime Prevention officer acts as an advisor contributing both technical expertise and their experiences in the field to encourage active participation from members. The challenge is to help members gain enough momentum so they can eventually function on their own as a team.