

Neighborhood Watch

New Program Training Guide



A community service project of the
Travis County Sheriff's Office
Community Outreach Unit



**Travis County Sheriff's Office
Community Outreach Unit
Keith Ruiz Building
5555 Airport Blvd, Austin
(512) 854-9770**

Helpful Resources:

◆ **www.tcsheriff.org**

This is also the site to watch for
National Night Out sign up

◆ **www.austincrimestoppers.org**

◆ **www.sheriffs.org**

◆ **www.usaonwatch.org**

◆ **www.americansecurityeducators.com** **American Security Educators**

Order signs, pamphlets, and products for a
your program

◆ **www.citizenobserver.com**

Citizen Observer

Stay connected and receive alerts from local
law enforcement by email and messages to
your phone

◆ **www.nnwi.org**

Nation Neighborhood Watch Institute

Purchase pamphlets, signs, and other products
for your program

Travis County Sheriff's Office

Administration (512) 854-9770

Non Emergency Dispatch (512) 974-0845 x3

911 for emergencies

Austin Crime Stoppers

Report crime tips

Administration (512) 452-5223

Tip line (512) 472-TIPS or

1-800-893- TIPS

National Sheriffs' Association

Find information on crime, crime prevention,
and other helpful links

USA on Watch

Register a watch program, find useful links,
and a neighborhood watch implementation
manual

To erect signs in your neighborhood, contact Transportation and Natural Resources Road &
Bridge Division: Jaime Garcia @ 266-3314 or jaime.garcia@co.travis.tx.us



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Dear Friends:

The American way of life is changing rapidly. Americans don't know their neighbors as well as they once did. Churches, schools and neighborhoods are no longer social institutions linking entire families into a single community. The front porch has disappeared and the family has moved its social activities to the backyard. As our communities become more crowded we all seek more and more privacy. That privacy, which moved from the front porch to the back yard, has had its price. The security and safety that our old neighborhoods and communities provided disappeared years ago.

The Neighborhood Watch Program was instituted in 1972 to response to the growing increase in burglaries and vandalism that was beginning to plague our homes and neighborhoods. Neighborhood Watch was initiated as a means of bringing citizens into action to protect their own property, to implement crime prevention measures, and to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in community crime prevention programs.

Burglary was selected as the target crime for Neighborhood Watch for four reasons. First, it accounts for nearly one-third of the index crime in the United States. Second, it is the one major crime that can be effectively resisted by each citizen taking positive action at home to reduce his own vulnerability. Third, burglary is one of the most serious and rapidly increasing major crimes facing law enforcement agencies in the suburban and rural areas of the country. Finally, while it is generally considered a crime against property, burglary has a high potential for death or injury to the victim who comes into surprise contact with the burglars.

Since 1972, Neighborhood Watch has proven to be an effective means for helping citizens to take positive steps to protect themselves and their neighbors against crime. The actions required to make a neighborhood safe from burglars also reduce the possibility of street assaults, sexual assaults, street robberies, and acts of vandalism.

Neighborhood Watch has helped restore the "front porch" to America. It is bringing neighbors into contact with each other once again for a common purpose—to make our homes and streets safe again.

It has created a spirit of cooperation between law enforcement officers and the people they serve. We are pleased that you have joined "our family" and look forward to working with you in the years to come.

Sincerely,

GREG HAMILTON

Travis County Sheriff's Office
Community Outreach Unit
(512) 854-9770

Neighborhood Watch Training Manual

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Introduction

The Neighborhood Watch program is a self-help community crime prevention program with the main objective being to reduce crime by involving citizens in their communities. It also hinges on the basic crime prevention concept of reducing the opportunity for crimes to occur through education. The Neighborhood Watch program is the most effective means available for keeping crime out of our neighborhoods. It relies on the best crime fighting tool ever invented— a watchful neighbor. Fortunately, good neighbors are found everywhere. They live in houses, in apartment buildings, and in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

When neighbors work together with law enforcement, one of the best crime fighting teams around is created. Be a watchful neighborhood and make your community safer from criminals by starting a Neighborhood Watch program in your neighborhood. Remember, people active alone will not win the battle against crime.

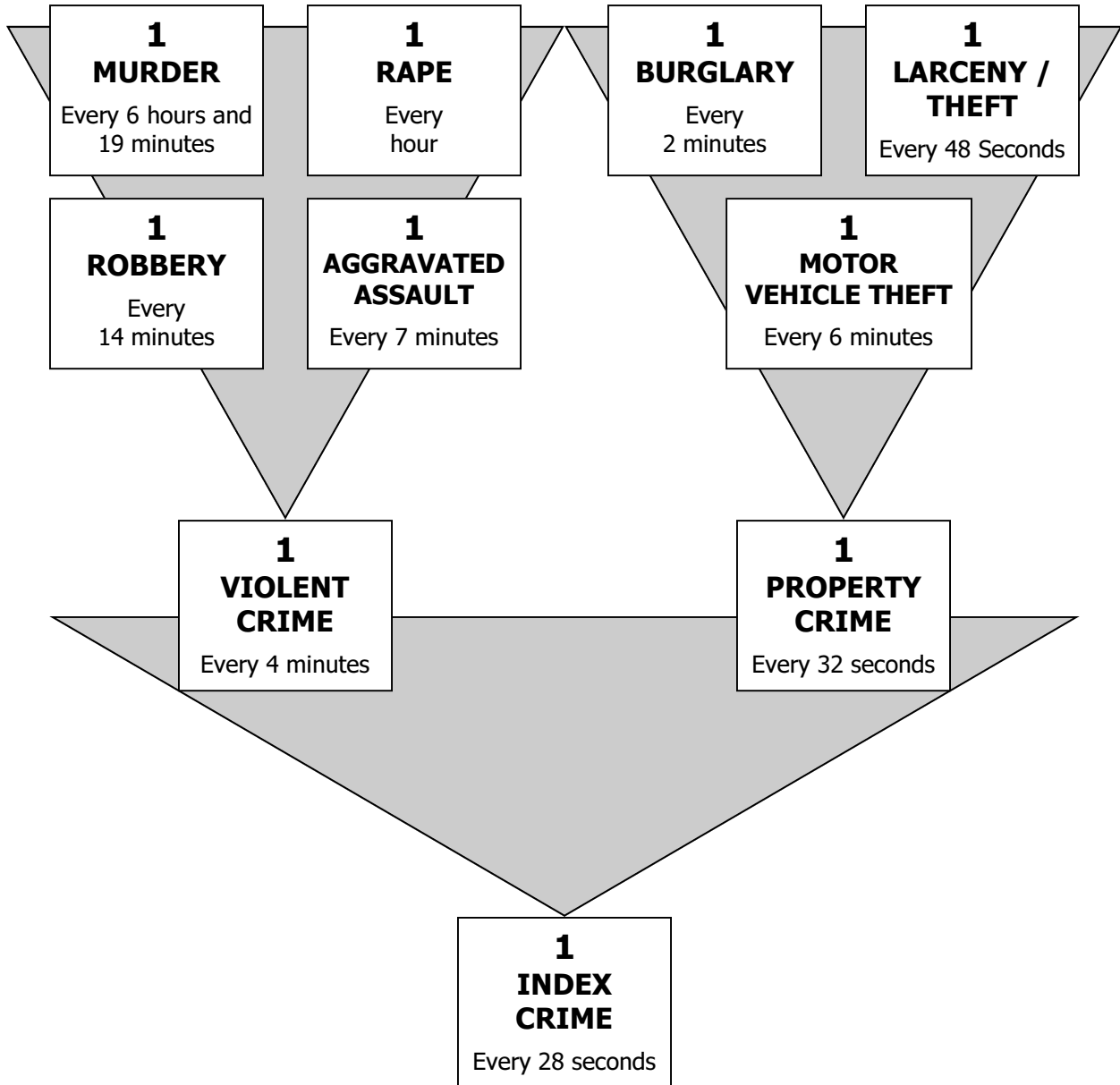
To help you start your Neighborhood Watch program, the Travis County Sheriff's Office has developed this guide to assist you in planning and organizing your first meetings. It explains how to work with your neighbors and law enforcement in starting and sustaining an effective Neighborhood Watch program. This guide also has information on special program activities, reporting suspicious activities, and Operation Identification.

Some would contend that crime prevention and citizen participation with law enforcement are both new concepts. But the prevention of crime has traditionally been both a police *duty* and a public *responsibility*. Criminal activity can only be reduced if individuals and communities resume their roles as partners with law enforcement. Crime is not inevitable. Much can be done to reduce crime and the individual and the community *can* have an impact.

Travis County Crime Statistics by Jurisdiction 2007

	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny / Theft	Auto Theft	Total
Travis County SO								Population 169,722
Number of Offenses	1	22	40	199	1064	2157	214	3697
Offenses Cleared	1	3	15	104	48	119	16	306
Percent Cleared	100	14	38	52	5	6	8	8
Index Crime Arrests	2	0	13	95	94	120	22	346
Austin PD								Population 716,817
Number of Offenses	30	328	1457	2056	8031	34,461	2961	49,324
Offenses Cleared	19	170	409	1,152	570	4,012	423	6,755
Percent Cleared	64	52	29	56	8	12	15	14
Index Crime Arrests	35	4	362	839	640	4,555	6	6,441
Pflugerville PD								Population 32,157
Number of Offenses	0	17	7	29	107	647	32	839
Offenses Cleared	0	4	4	21	12	106	5	152
Percent Cleared	0	24	58	72	12	17	16	18
Index Crime Arrests	0	4	5	15	19	111	8	162
Jonestown PD								Population 2,192
Number of Offenses	4	1	0	9	10	41	1	66
Offenses Cleared	0	0	0	2	0	8	0	10
Percent Cleared	0	0	0	22	0	20	0	15
Index Crime Arrests	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Lakeway PD								Population 9,774
Number of Offenses	0	1	0	12	39	153	5	210
Offenses Cleared	0	1	0	8	7	36	2	54
Percent Cleared	0	100	0	67	18	24	40	26
Index Crime Arrests	0	0	0	7	7	15	3	32
Lago Vista PD								Population 5,986
Number of Offenses	0	0	0	4	33	69	5	111
Offenses Cleared	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	6
Percent Cleared	0	0	0	50	0	6	0	5
Index Crime Arrests	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	7
Manor PD								Population 2,993
Number of Offenses	0	1	1	8	29	66	2	107
Offenses Cleared	0	1	0	3	0	3	0	7
Percent Cleared	0	100	0	38	0	5	0	7
Index Crime Arrests	0	1	1	5	2	2	0	11
Mustang Ridge PD								Population 931
Number of Offenses	0	0	0	4	5	7	2	18
Offenses Cleared	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Percent Cleared	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	11
Index Crime Arrests	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Rollingwood PD								Population 1,363
Number of Offenses	0	0	0	0	5	23	0	28
Offenses Cleared	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Percent Cleared	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	7
Index Crime Arrests	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Sunset Valley PD								Population 798
Number of Offenses	0	0	2	0	7	141	5	155
Offenses Cleared	0	0	2	0	3	38	0	43
Percent Cleared	0	0	100	0	43	27	0	28
Index Crime Arrests	0	0	1	0	3	48	1	53
Westlake Hills PD								Population 3,044
Number of Offenses	0	0	1	2	16	59	0	78
Offenses Cleared	0	0	1	3	2	15	0	21
Percent Cleared	0	0	100	150	13	26	0	27
Index Crime Arrests	0	0	1	3	1	12	1	18

TEXAS CRIME CLOCK 2007



Note: As the most aggregate representation of Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data, the Crime Clock should be viewed with care. The Crime Clock conveys the relative frequency of Index Crimes. This display does not imply any regularity in the commission of crimes, but rather the clock represents the annual ratio of crimes to fixed time intervals.

Source: Texas Department of Public Safety—Uniform Crime Reporting



A History of Citizen Involvement

The appointment of Sir Henry Fielding as a London magistrate in 1748 led to the first systematized establishment of police forces in England. In 1751 he wrote one of the first treaties on law enforcement, in which he stated that a primary duty of the police was the *prevention of crime*. However, in Fielding's view ***the active participation of the public***, in addition to a strong police force was essential to success. Fielding was the first to establish a register of criminals, to list stolen property, and to advertise in public journals for information about criminal acts.

Fielding's half-brother, John, succeeded him as magistrate in 1754 and continued his efforts. It was John who brought about regular budgets to support street patrols, and who developed pamphlets about police duties, emphasizing prevention. At his death 26 years later, however there were still only a few organized police units. It was 50 more years before Sir Robert Peel, the Home Secretary of England, succeeded in influencing Parliament to enact the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829. Peel is considered by many to be the father of modern law enforcement. His first order to the Metropolitan Police contained statements that the basic mission of the police was the prevention of crime and disorder, and that the police were to secure the ***willing cooperation of the public***. He stated, "At all times, police should maintain a relationship with the public that gives the reality to the historic tradition; the police are the public and the public are the police".

What is Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program, which enlists the active participation of citizens in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime in their communities.

It involves:

- ◆ Neighbors getting to know each other, taking the time to care about each other, and working together in a program of mutual assistance.
- ◆ Citizens being trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhoods.
- ◆ Crime prevention strategies such as home security, Operation Identification and others being implemented by citizens.

Neighborhood Watch was created to obtain citizen involvement in discouraging and preventing residential crime. Neighborhood Watch programs are not designed as substitutes for police protection, rather they supplement police activities by providing extra eyes and ears. When neighbors know each other personally, they are more observant of such activities which are suspicious or out of place like strange cars in the neighborhood or suspicious persons who are at your home while you are away.

The participants make their neighborhood a safer place to live by becoming more active and involved in their neighborhood activities. As a result, they become more aware of problems when they occur. This will not take a lot of time and soon will develop into a daily routine of watching out for what goes on in your neighborhood. Neighborhood Watch programs help to create an identity within the neighborhood which in turn fosters a sense of pride and belonging for the participants.

How Neighborhood Watch Works

Neighborhood Watch operates to educate participants in the principles of deterrence, delay, and detection. The program depends on a communications network organized with three levels of participants: The residents, blocks captains, and representatives from the Travis County Sheriff's Office Community Outreach Unit. Reduction in burglary is likely because it is a well publicized program of prevention and target hardening coupled with citizen concern for the safety and security of the neighborhood.

How Do I Start a Neighborhood Watch Program?

TALK WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS

- ◆ Explain that you would like to start a Neighborhood Watch group and ask them to participate to take the first steps in starting a Neighborhood Watch program.
- ◆ Discuss crime problems in your area. Community Outreach Unit officers can assist you in determining the extent of the crime problem and provide you with information on specific crime statistics for your neighborhood.
- ◆ Briefly explain the value of the Neighborhood Watch program and its potential impact on local crime.
- ◆ Invite them to attend a neighborhood meeting to discuss starting a Neighborhood Watch program. Be sure to mention that Neighborhood Watch does not require that they attend frequent meetings and it does not ask that anyone take any personal risks to prevent crime.

CONTACT THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH UNIT AT 854-9770

- ◆ Explain that you would like to start a Neighborhood Watch program in your area and ask for assistance.
- ◆ Be prepared to discuss the size and boundaries of the proposed Neighborhood Watch program with the officer at that time.
- ◆ Coordinate a date and time for the first Neighborhood Watch orientation meeting with the officer.

PLANNING THE FIRST NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH MEETING

- ◆ Make arrangements to use a convenient meeting place that will accommodate the number of people expected to attend. If the size of the group allows, meet in someone's home to foster an informal, comfortable atmosphere.
- ◆ Design a simple flyer to notify neighborhood residents of the time and place of the meeting. Place the flyers on community bulletin boards in stores, churches, post offices, etc., or deliver them to every home in the area. Plan ahead to allow every one plenty of notice.
- ◆ Distribute nametags and ask attendees to sign in as they arrive. Provide refreshment such as coffee and cookies. This all helps to create a relaxed atmosphere and encourages people to get to know each other.

Remember, don't be disappointed if everyone cannot attend. 100% neighborhood participation is desirable but is not required for the program to work.

Travis County Sheriff's Office—Community Services Unit—Neighborhood Watch Meeting Roster

Date:

	Name	Mailing Address	Phone	Email
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
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11				
12				
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20				

Keeping the Program Alive

Unless Neighborhood Watch organizations continue to pursue worthy goals they will eventually stagnate and die. Keeping neighbors united in a general effort to improve their common environment is the most effective and worthwhile way to avoid the onset of apathy. Remember that a neighborhood's very appearance immediately signals to prospective intruders whether or not its' residences are easy targets. Getting involved in other projects such as improving sidewalks, fences, landscaping, security, security lighting, and the appearance of homes and lots gives neighbors a sense of accomplishment and pride in their community. At the same time it sends a message to criminals that the citizens care about themselves and their homes. Expanding the group's purpose to include training in fire prevention, first aid, personal safety, and health is a productive way to keep it active.

Another important tool in keeping a program working is communication. Schedule monthly meetings to discuss crime issues in your neighborhood. Be sure and keep the meetings informal and short. People in general do not like to attend meetings. Hold the meetings at someone's home if possible and always try to provide refreshments. Meetings should be interesting and informative, if not sometimes fun. If your group is large enough you may be able to arrange guest speakers each month. Be creative. There are many interesting people in your community who would be willing to come and speak to your group including: politicians, law enforcement officers, weatherman, radio personalities, etc...

Another way to keep communication flowing in your neighborhood is with a monthly newsletter. The newsletter does not have to be anything elaborate and can include information other than just local crimes news. You can keep the reader's interest by including garage sales notices, neighborhood services such as Mary Kay, Girl Scout cookie sales, yard and handy man services, house cleaning and babysitting, lawn and garden tips, recipes, and school awards received by neighborhood children.

Program Activities

Keeping a program active is dependant upon more than just communication. You must constantly work at keeping the group's activities interesting. In addition to monthly meetings you should also plan fun activities. Many successful programs have annual block parties where everyone gathers on a weekend afternoon to bar-b-que and play outdoors games. Other groups have held periodic potluck dinners, spaghetti suppers, and even super bowl parties. Neighbors can also get together and participate in other group activities such as sponsoring neighborhood softball tournaments, youth activities, and garage sales to raise money for new signs or other projects, neighborhood clean ups, or holiday events (Easter egg hunts, Christmas caroling, etc...).

Make belonging to your Neighborhood Watch group enjoyable. Remember, people will most likely become involved and remain interested if the programs are fun as well as meaningful. These activities encourage citizens to interact and feel ownership within the neighborhood, not just their home.

Program Participant Guidelines

As a **Member** of Neighborhood Watch you should:

- ◆ Get to know your neighbors. Know their names and be able to identify them and their vehicles by sight.
- ◆ Maintain a map of your neighborhood along with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of your neighbors. You should also have daytime work telephone numbers in case you need to contact them at work, or a relative's number in case of an emergency while your neighbor is away and unavailable.
- ◆ Implement home security measures to make your residence unattractive to a potential burglar.
- ◆ Mark all of your property using the Operation Identification program, and conduct a complete inventory of your valuables.
- ◆ Be watchful over your neighbors' homes, especially when they are away or on vacation.
- ◆ Write down license plate numbers and descriptions of suspicious looking vehicles and persons in the neighborhood and report them to the Sheriff's Office immediately.

As a **Block Captain** you should:

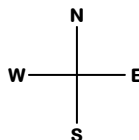
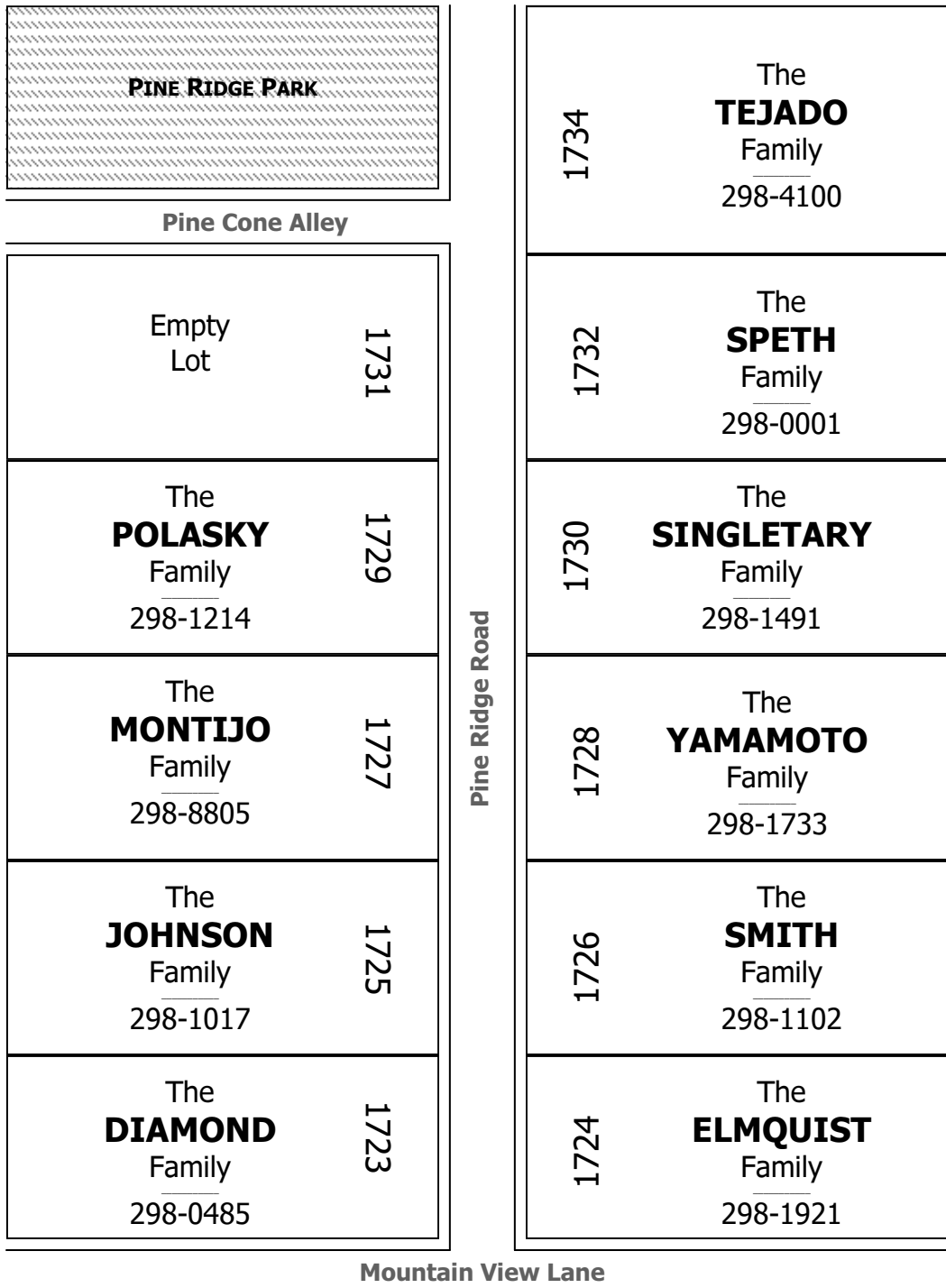
- ◆ Be familiar with your assigned area and its members.
- ◆ Keep residents informed of meetings, crime concerns in your area, and new residents.
- ◆ Recruit new members as they move into your neighborhood, and encourage participation for members that have lost interest.
- ◆ Attend quarterly Block Captain meetings.

As a **Program Coordinator** you should:

- ◆ Provide leadership and organization to the group.
- ◆ Plan and schedule group action, monthly meetings, and quarterly Block Captain meetings.
- ◆ Preside over meetings and supervise neighborhood newsletter.
- ◆ Work with Blocks Captains to establish block boundaries and fill Block Captain vacancies.
- ◆ Supervise collection of funds for Neighborhood Watch signs and stickers.
- ◆ Serve as a liaison with the Travis County Sheriff's Office and notify them of any new programs or updated contact information.

Example of a neighborhood map

Prepared by block Captains



Suspicious Activities and Situations

What actually constitutes a suspicious person? Suspicious is actually a very broad term and could apply to a multitude of situations however, we have compiled the following situations which will help guide you in determining if a particular person or incident should be reported. These situations serve as a guideline only. It is impossible to list every possible type of suspicious behavior, so be alert and use good judgment and common sense. If you are in doubt, notify the Sheriff's Office anyway. It is always best to check it out than to wait and wonder if you could have prevented a crime if you had reported it earlier.

BE AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. **SOMEONE GOING DOOR-TO-DOOR IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.** Watch for a short time to be certain that the canvas is legitimate. Observe whether the person tries a door to see if it is unlocked, looks into the windows, or goes into the backyard, etc...
2. **WAITING OR LOITERING IN FRONT OF A HOUSE OR BUSINESS.** Especially if the business is closed or the homeowner is away. This could be a burglar casing the premises.
3. **SOMEONE FORCING A DOOR OPEN.** This could be just someone who accidentally locked himself out, but it also could be someone attempting a burglary, theft, or vandalism.
4. **A BROKEN WINDOW PANE or a door standing ajar to a business or residence** could mean that it has been burglarized. Beware because the burglar may still be in the inside. Never go into a business. Call the Sheriff's Office and let the responding deputies ensure the potential burglar is no longer inside.
5. **A PERSON CARRYING UNUSUAL PROPERTY** such as TV's, stereos, guns, or other items (especially at night). This could be a suspect fleeing the scene of a burglary or theft.
6. **SOMEONE LOADING PROPERTY INTO A VEHICLE** in an unusual place or hour. This could be a burglary in progress.
7. **VEHICLES DRIVING SLOWLY THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD** with no apparent destination or with the headlights turned off. Burglars may be casing the neighborhood looking for an easy target.
8. **PERSONS LOITERING AROUND CARS** or going from car to car looking into them. They may be looking for a car to steal or to break into.
9. **SOMEONE RUNNING OR TRYING TO HIDE**, especially if they appear panicked or are carrying property, or a gun. They could be a burglar or a robbery suspect trying to elude law enforcement officers. Try to safely keep tabs on the person and immediately call the police.

10. **SOMEONE SELLING VALUABLE ITEMS** at a ridiculously low price. There is a high likelihood the property is stolen.
11. **THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS OR GUNSHOTS.** This may be a crime in progress such as a burglary, sexual assault, or an assault.
12. **A PERSON SCREAMING.** This could also indicate an in progress crime such as an assault, sexual assault, robbery, or even a murder.
13. **SOMEONE BEING FORCED INTO A VEHICLE** against their will, especially juveniles or women. This could be a serious crime such as a kidnapping or sexual assault.
14. **A PERSON WITH BLOOD STAINED CLOTHING.** This could be either a victim or suspect of a serious crime involving injury.
15. **SOMEONE EXHIBITING UNUSUAL MENTAL OR PHYSICAL BEHAVIOR.** This could indicate a person who is injured, under the influence of drugs, or an emotionally disturbed person.
16. **EXCESSIVE PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC** to and from a certain building or residence could indicate criminal activity such as: drug trafficking, prostitution, or selling stolen property.
17. **BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS FROM CARS** could indicate drug transactions, especially if money changes hands.
18. **A PARKED OR OCCUPIED VEHICLE** containing one or more individuals could be casing a home, or a lookout for a burglary or robbery attempt. This is more suspicious if at an unusual time of day.
19. **AN ABANDONED VEHICLE** parked on the street, or in a rural or obscured location could be a stolen vehicle that has been abandoned.
20. **CONTINUOUS REPAIR OPERATIONS** at a non-business location could signal a "chop shop" where stolen cars are stripped for their parts.
21. **UNUSUAL CHEMICAL OR AMMONIA ODOR.** While this may be indicative of a gas leak or chemical spill, many times it could be a sign of a drug lab where methamphetamines are being manufactured. These are usually found in rural areas and may possibly set up in a motor home or RV for frequent relocation.

Reporting Suspicious or Criminal Activity

IF A CRIME OCCURS REPORT IT!

Sound easy? Unfortunately, only about half of all crimes are ever reported. Law enforcement officers are unable to do anything about the crime if they don't know about it, or if they are notified several days after the fact. Eyewitness information is the key to solving most crimes. If you witness a crime you need to report it. The purpose for reporting suspicious activity is to prevent a crime from occurring.

Remember these tips for reporting criminal or suspicious activity:

1. Notify the Sheriff's Office immediately by calling **911**. You can also contact Patrol Services directly by calling 974-0845 (extension 3). (Remember that in an **EMERGENCY** if you do call **911** your address and telephone numbers may not be immediately available to the operator. Give this information first in case you get disconnected.)
2. Tell the Communication Operator as much as you can about the incident. No fact is too trivial. In many cases it is what victims and witnesses tell law enforcement officers about the offender that results in the arrest of that person. Please remember that incorrect information is worse than no information at all and can sometimes hinder an investigation or search allowing the offenders to evade capture and arrest. When calling it is sometimes important to provide the following information:
 - ◆ What occurred?
 - ◆ When did the incident occur?
 - ◆ Where did it happen?
 - ◆ How many suspects were there?
 - What did they say?
 - What did they do?
 - Did they take anything?
 - What direction did they leave?
 - Were they in a vehicle?
 - ◆ Were there any other witnesses?
 - ◆ Is there any other information, which you feel is important?
3. Describe the suspects. Copy the form on the next page and keep it near the phone. Fill it out after the crime has occurred and give the information to the Communication Operator when you report the crime. You may then want to give the form to the first officer on the scene.
4. Describe the suspect vehicle and the direction of travel. Use the form on the next page.
5. Sheriff's Office procedure prohibits the release of the identity of a caller or witness. If you report a crime or suspicious activity you do not have to be contacted by an officer, and you may choose not to give your name. However, a valuable witness is one that we can contact later for more detailed information or even a statement.

Sometimes, due to limited resources and personnel, Sheriff's Deputies may not be able to respond immediately to your call. We must prioritize calls based on apparent danger to human life. Please be patient, as we will respond as soon as possible.

Suspect Description Form

Race: _____ Sex: _____ Approximate age: _____ Hair Color: _____

Name (if known): _____

Height: _____ Weight: _____ Glasses: _____ Complexion: _____

Mustache: _____ Beard: _____

Scars, Marks or Tattoos: _____

Clothing description (check type and indicate color):

<input type="checkbox"/> Cap	<input type="checkbox"/> Hat	<input type="checkbox"/> Gloves	<input type="checkbox"/> Tie	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Color: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Coat	<input type="checkbox"/> Jacket	<input type="checkbox"/> Shoes	Color: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Shirt	<input type="checkbox"/> Blouse	<input type="checkbox"/> Dress	Color: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Pants	<input type="checkbox"/> Skirt	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	Color: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Jewelry	<input type="checkbox"/> Purse	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	Color: _____		

Weapon:

Handgun Rifle Shotgun Knife Other: _____

Description: _____

Misc Information: _____

Vehicle Description Form

Color of Vehicle: _____ License Plate: _____ State: _____

Year: _____ Make: _____ Model: _____

Body Style:

2-door 4-door Convertible Station Wagon SUV

Misc Information: _____

Other Identifying Information:

Hub Caps: _____ Wheels: _____ Dents : _____

Scratches: _____ Bumper Stickers: _____ Decals: _____

Operation Identification

OPERATION IDENTIFICATION is the name given to a nationwide program of marking personal property indelibly with a unique identifying number, which acts as a means of discouraging burglary and theft. Operation ID also permits positive identification of the items if lost or stolen. In communities where it has been properly implemented, the program has shown dramatic results in its ability to reduce burglaries and theft.

The greatest benefit is that it acts as a deterrent. Without identifying numbers, the stolen property can be sold to pawnshops, flea markets, fences, and even on the street to other criminals. Burglars know that it is many times impossible to dispose of stolen property that is properly marked. It increases the burglar's chances of discovery and ultimate apprehension. On the other hand, many law enforcement agencies have property rooms full of stolen property that they are unable to return to the rightful owner because there are no identifying numbers or the owners did not know the serial numbers of the items and therefore it cannot be traced.

Here is how it works. Operation Identification is comprised of three parts.

1. **MAKE A LIST** of all of your valuables and keep a copy in a safe place. If you should ever become a victim of a burglary or theft you will be able to quickly describe the stolen property from a list. Be sure to include the **BRAND NAME** of the item, the **MODEL NUMBER**, and the **SERIAL NUMBER**. This information is important so that the officer who takes the report can enter your stolen items into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer. Property entered into the NCIC computer can be recovered throughout the United States if an officer in another state runs the serial number.
2. **ENGRAVE YOUR DRIVERS LICENSE** number on the item. **DO NOT** use your social security number. Engrave your drivers license number onto the item preceded by the two letter abbreviation for the state; ie: Texas = TX. The eight digit number should then be followed by DL if you have a drivers license or ID if you have a State issued identification card. When you are through your number should look like this:

TX12345678DL or **TX12345678ID**

Be sure and engrave the number somewhere where it cannot be altered or dismantled from the item. It is a good idea to mark the item in two places. First, where it can easily be seen by looking at the item. Second, somewhere such as the bottom or inside of the case where the burglar cannot easily see it. If the first number is somehow removed you will still be able to identify your property. Make sure that you indicate in your inventory where you marked the item. Place a small Operation ID sticker next to the first number to let everyone know that the item has been marked.

3. PHOTOGRAPH each one of your valuables. This is especially important in cases where items are small, hard to describe, or cannot be engraved (eg: jewelry). Insurance companies encourage individuals to photograph or video tape all of their insured possessions. This makes filing a claim easier and quicker because you have a better chance of identifying your property.

Remember that in order for operation identification to work as a crime prevention tool, the burglar must be aware that you have taken steps to mark your property. Place an Operation Identification label on each door and window to show that you are participating in Operation ID.

Electric engravers can be purchased at any hardware store for less than \$20. However, if you do not wish to purchase an engraver, the Sheriff's Office has several for loan at no cost. There is a \$15 refundable deposit required for each engraver. Contact the Community Outreach Unit at 854-9770 for more information.

Operation ID stickers can be purchased from the same vendor that sells the Neighborhood Watch signs. Websites for vendors are listed on the inside cover of this manual. For more information contact the Community Outreach unit at 854-9770.



Sign Installation Guidelines

The purchase and installation of Neighborhood Watch signs are the responsibility of the Neighborhood Watch program or the neighborhood association sponsoring the program. Neighborhood Watch signs like the one on the next page can be purchased from any sign vendor provided they meet certain requirements; however, the Travis County Sheriff's Office recommends that the signs be purchased from the vendors indicated inside the front cover of this manual. The Neighborhood Watch materials featured by these vendors are in compliance with the National Sheriff's Association Neighborhood Watch program standards.

The following requirements have been imposed by the Travis County Sheriff's Office to ensure continuity and safety in the Travis County Neighborhood Watch program.

- ◆ Neighborhood Watch signs should be a minimum size of 24"x 36" to provide for adequate visibility.
- ◆ Neighborhood Watch signs should conform to the National Sheriff's Association design (white and orange in color with black lettering, and the word SHERIFF shall appear in the bottom portion of the sign). Personalized signs indicating either the name of the Neighborhood Watch program or the Travis County Sheriff's Office may be purchased by the program or the association for an additional charge.
- ◆ Neighborhood Watch signs must not be attached to any regulatory or directional sign post owned by the county, state or other governmental agency. Neighborhood Watch signs must not be placed in the county or state right-of-way, UNLESS the Neighborhood Watch program is *certified by the Travis County Sheriff's Office*. With proper authorization, signs may be posted on private property or on any structure owned by the neighborhood or homeowner's association. When posting signs on poles in the county or state right-of-way, the sign pole must be located a minimum of six (6) feet from the edge (or curb) of the roadway, and there must be a minimum clearance of seven (7) feet from the bottom of the sign to the ground.

To erect signs in your neighborhood, contact Transportation and Natural Resources Road & Bridge Division:

Jaime Garcia @ 266-3314 or jaime.garcia@co.travis.tx.us

WARNING



**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
PROGRAM IN FORCE**

We immediately report
all **SUSPICIOUS PERSONS** and
activities to the
TRAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

National Night Out

National Night Out (NNO) is an annual event historically held on one of two dates in the Summer or Fall months. National Night Out is sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch. Past year's National Night Out campaigns involved citizens, law enforcement agencies, civics groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations and local public officials from over 9000 communities from all 50 states, U.S. territories, Canadian cities and military bases worldwide. In all, over 29.5 million participated in National Night Out last year.

National Night Out is designed to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness, generate support for and participation in local anticrime efforts, and to strengthen neighborhood spirit and law enforcement - community partnership. Its primary goal is to send a strong message to criminals to let them know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back.

Along with the traditional display of porch lights and front yard vigils, cities, towns and neighborhoods celebrate NNO with a variety of events and activities to include block parties, cookouts, visits from local law enforcement officers, parades, flashlight walks, contests, and youth programs. NNO has proven to be an effective, inexpensive and enjoyable program to promote neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships in our fight for safer communities. The benefits your community will derive from NNO will most certainly extend well beyond the one night.

The Travis County Sheriff's Office has promoted National Night Out since its inception. Our participation has grown from helping with a handful of neighborhood gatherings, to over 4000 participants enjoying block parties, carnivals, parades, and an assortment of other activities. Our involvement has grown from a couple of crime prevention officers, to dozens of Patrol Deputies, Sergeants, Lieutenants, Captains, Majors, County Commissioners, and the Sheriff.

Our local efforts and participation in the NNO program have been recognized nationally by the National Association of Town Watch. The first time registry earned a rank of 14th in the nation for the population group 100,000-250,000.

National Night Out is a great way to get together with your neighbors, find out what's going on in your community and visit with local law enforcement officers about what you can do to help reduce the opportunities for crimes to occur. Participation can be as simple as a small block party, or as big as a parade and a carnival.

To get involved, or to find out how to register your event for National Night Out, visit the NNO website at: www.natw.org/nno

Please ensure you also register your event locally, by calling your Travis County Sheriff's Community Outreach representative directly or at (512) 854-9770.