

# Neighborhood Watch Training Book



Prince William County Police Department  
Crime Prevention Unit  
703-792-7270  
[crimeprevention@pwcgov.org](mailto:crimeprevention@pwcgov.org)  
[www.pwcgov.org/police](http://www.pwcgov.org/police)

# Phone Numbers

## **Police Department Numbers:**

Emergency: 9-1-1

Non-Emergency / Suspicious Activity: 703-792-6500

Crime Prevention Unit: 703-792-7270

Traffic Complaint Line: 703-792-5919

Records: 703-792-6562

Vice & Narcotics Tip-line: 703-792-7248

Magistrate – Eastern PWC: 703-792-7360

Magistrate – Western PWC: 703-792-6260

Crime Solvers: 703-670-3700 OR 1-866-411-TIPS

Public Information Office: 703-792-7245

Prince William Crime Prevention Council:

[www.facebook.com/cpcpw](http://www.facebook.com/cpcpw)   [www.pwcpc.weebly.com](http://www.pwcpc.weebly.com)

## **Other Agency Numbers:**

Public Works – Neighborhood Services: 703-792-7018

Public Works – Street Lighting: 703-792-6825

Public Works – Street Signs: 703-792-7070

Prince William Clean Community Council: – 571-285-3772

# Welcome to Neighborhood Watch

Welcome to the Neighborhood Watch Program. Neighborhood Watch is a free service sponsored by the Prince William County Police Department and operated by members of our community.

## AS A WATCH MEMBER YOU WILL:

1. Look out for your neighbors.  
The Neighborhood Watch program is all about getting to know one another and watching out for each other. During the course of your daily activities remain alert of any activity occurring in your neighborhood.
2. Report any unusual or suspicious persons, vehicles or activities.  
You will never be asked to involve yourself by investigating suspicious activity but you will be expected to phone the police when something doesn't look right to you.
3. Make your home as burglar resistant as possible.  
We do not want the homes in our neighborhood to be easy targets. Good locks, closed windows and lights on at night are your best defense. Additional home security information is available from the Police Departments Crime Prevention Unit at 703-792-7270.
4. Explain to your children, new neighbor, friends and others the purpose of the Neighborhood Watch Program and its benefits.  
Solicit their support and encourage them to contribute to the program.

## BENEFITS OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

- Provides residents a personal contact within the Police Department.
- Brings neighbors closer together.
- Crime prevention training.
- Increases reporting of crime and suspicious activities.
- Neighborhood Watch signs send a warning to criminals.
- Provides residents with access to crime patterns and trends through crime alerts and calls for service reports.
- Home security surveys.

# Coordinator and Block Captain Duties

## COORDINATOR DUTIES

- Attend Crime Prevention Council Meetings, quarterly Coordinator Meetings and share any noteworthy information.
- Recruit members and Block Captains and set-up meetings – if needed.
- Maintain an awareness of crime in the area.
- Maintain a roster of members involved in Neighborhood Watch.
- Hold Block Captain Meetings and prepare schedules, if needed.
- Publish a Newsletter, if needed.
- Act as an administrative liaison between the Police Department and the community.
- Disseminate Crime Prevention information, Crime Alerts and newsletters that are sent to you by your Crime Prevention Officer.
- Encourage your Watch members to attend Crime Prevention Council Meetings and Coordinator Meetings.

## BLOCK CAPTAIN DUTIES

- Attend Crime Prevention Council Meetings, quarterly Coordinator Meetings and share any noteworthy information when the Coordinator is unable to attend the meetings.
- Responsible for distributing information to approximately 5-10 homes in the immediate area.
- Disseminate Crime Prevention Information, Crime Alerts and newsletters.
- Help recruit new members.
- Maintain a current roster of members within your area.
- Assist in the set up of a patrol schedule if needed.
- Encourage reporting of suspicious activity and crime.
- Assist the Coordinator as needed.

# Neighborhood Watch Code

## HOME SECURITY

We will conduct security inspections of our homes and practice realistic security measures, to include:

- \* Securing doors, windows, garages, personal property, and automobiles.
- \* Lighting front and rear areas of our homes during hours of darkness.
- \* Marking our personal property by engraving or other means, to deter theft and expedite the recovery of stolen items.
- \* Coordinating activities and extended absences with our immediate neighbors and block captains to ensure adequate security coverage.

## COMMUNITY AWARENESS

We will be watchful for any unusual or suspicious persons, activities, or vehicles in our neighborhood.

## CRIME REPORTING

If we suspect or observe a crime in progress or see evidence of a crime having been committed, we will contact the police immediately at 703-792-6500 or 9-1-1.

## WATCH PATROL

We will take every opportunity during the course of our daily activities to go out of our way to be observant. When called upon, we will participate in scheduled Neighborhood Watch patrols and will abide by the patrol instructions issued by the Prince William County Police Department.

## EDUCATION AND RECRUITING

We will explain to our children, new neighbors, friends and others the purpose of the Neighborhood Watch Program and its benefits. We will solicit their support and encourage them to contribute to the program within their capabilities as responsible citizens.

## SAFETY

We recognize the goals of Neighborhood Watch to be personal safety, protection of property and an enhanced quality of life for our neighborhood. We will not endanger ourselves or others to achieve these goals. We understand that our mission is to *deter, observe and report*.

## NEIGHBORHOOD

We acknowledge that this program cannot be successful without a commitment to one another as neighbors. We agree to be open minded when a neighbor comes to us with a problem and pledge to do our best to resolve neighborhood problems as a team.

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# Suspicious Activity – What is it?

Suspicious Activity is any activity that is questionable. In your neighborhood you know the “normal” type of activity that takes place. Suspicious activity is anything that just doesn’t look right.

## SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY CONCERNING PERSONS

ACTIVITY	POSSIBLE CRIME
Going door-to-door in a residential neighborhood	Possible “door knock” burglary suspect
Waiting or loitering in front of a closed business or unoccupied houses	Possible burglary suspects or trespassers
Forcing entrance into an unoccupied home	Possible burglary or theft suspects
Person carrying property, especially if running or at an unusual hour	Possible suspect fleeing from the scene of a crime
Screaming or loud voices	Possible rape or assault
Loitering near schools or parks	Possible sex offender
Items or services for sale at very low prices	Possible stolen property or fraudulent scheme
Heavy traffic to and from a specific residence on a regular basis	Possible drug or stolen property operation
Forcing entry into a locked vehicle, especially in a parking lot	Possible theft of car or it’s contents
Hearing noises sounding like gunshots or fireworks	Possible firearm or firework violation
Person acting unusual	Possibly ill or on drugs
Persons pulling on vehicle car door handles	Possible theft of car or it’s contents

## SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY CONCERNING VEHICLES

ACTIVITY	POSSIBLE CRIME
Driving slowly and aimlessly through a residential neighborhood	Possible burglary suspects or sex offender
Parked, occupied vehicles; especially at unusual hour	Possible burglary suspects, sex offender or drug activity
Vehicle driving at night without lights	Possible burglary suspect
Person being forced into vehicle	Possible kidnapping, assault or attempted rape
Objects thrown out of a vehicle	Possible disposal of contraband
Business transaction being conducted out of a vehicle	Possible sale of drugs or stolen property
Vehicle parked in front of an unoccupied home or closed business being loaded with valuables	Possible burglary or theft in progress
Vehicle being operated with a cracked steering column or screwdriver in the ignition switch	Possible stolen vehicle
Sound of breaking glass	Possible burglary or theft

# Reporting Suspicious Activity / Crime Reporting

## WHAT NUMBER DO I CALL?

**9-1-1** - immediate threat to life or property, crime in progress

**703-792-6500** – Suspicious activity, past occurrences, non life threatening.

Do not call your block captain or coordinator to report an incident. Call the police to handle the situation. You can notify the coordinator of the incident afterwards.

## THE CALL TAKER WILL ASK YOU:

- Your Name (optional or Neighborhood Watch member)
- Your Address (optional)
- Nature of problem – What is it?
- Location of problem – Where is it?
- Description of involved people, vehicles, etc.
- *Do you want to speak to the officer?* If you want to talk to the officer, tell the dispatcher when you call.

## WHAT ABOUT RESPONSE TIMES??

- \* Calls are handled on a priority, not order received.
- \* The way a call is reported has a lot to do with priority given, do not minimize the call.
- \* If a situation escalates/changes, you need to call back and advise the calltaker so the call will receive the appropriate priority.

## WHY REPORT A CRIME?

We need to know a problem exists, so do your neighbors.  
If you don't report, we will not know a problem exists that needs attention.



# Patrol Instructions

## SAFETY FIRST!

### PATROL WITH A PARTNER

This is not only a safety measure but it also provides for an additional witness and assistance in case of trouble. Residents at least 18 years old should participate in the patrol. Participants must have participated in a training session. Participants may not drink alcoholic beverages while on patrol or be intoxicated.

### TRANSPORTATION

Walk, Drive or both.

### SCHEDULE

Random patrolling is the best. Any hour of the day is suitable. Remember holidays and special events. (Halloween, spring break, start of summer vacation)

### AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

Your designated Neighborhood Watch area.

### PATROL UNARMED!!

No side-arms, shotguns, pepper spray, mace, axe handles, animals or any other type of weapon. These are prohibited while on patrol.

### REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

If you suspect criminal activity, observe a crime in progress or see evidence of a crime having been committed, contact the police. Identify yourself as a Neighborhood Watch member to the dispatcher and provide the appropriate information.

### MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY

It is just as important for potential law breakers to see you to deter any "would be" criminals.

### DON'T DETAIN INDIVIDUALS

Not only might this be dangerous but you could also be violating their civil or legal rights.

### IDENTIFY VICTIMS/WITNESSES

Urge victims/witnesses to file a formal complaint. Many crimes are not reported, remain unsolved or offenders aren't punished because people refuse to get involved.

### REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Immediately report suspicious activity/persons to the police, *not the Block Captain or Coordinator.*



**IF ANYTHING LOOKS SUSPICIOUS, REPORT IT!**  
***If something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't.***



# Patrol Scenarios

- A patroller observes a car speeding. He motions with his hands and yells at the driver to slow down.

**INAPPROPRIATE ACTION:** The patroller has two options: Contact Communications at 792-6500 and they will issue a lookout for the vehicle or contact the Traffic Complaint Line if it's an ongoing problem.

- Two patrollers walk past a group of young men playing loud music on the street corner. One patroller points out that it is getting late and suggests that they turn down the music.

**APPROPRIATE ACTION:** It is an appropriate action to take as long as it's done in a polite, non-confrontational way.

- A watch member observes two young males walking through a parking area pulling on car door handles. She ducks down between the cars to see if they will attempt a break in.

**INAPPROPRIATE ACTION:** You are to deter crime, not apprehend criminals. She should continue here patrol in full view of the potential offenders without confronting them. Make a mental note of their descriptions and proceed to a phone.

- A patrol team calls to have a suspicious person checked out. They wait for 45 minutes, but do not see an officer so they give up on the Watch because the police did not respond to their call.

**INAPPROPRIATE ACTION:** Call back. The officer may have already responded but perhaps to the wrong location, or a missing child or other emergency may mean that the call has not yet been dispatched. If a call is not handled to your satisfaction, call your Crime Prevention Officer the next day. We can track the call and can usually identify a reasonable explanation for the delay.

- A patrol team observes a trespasser in the playground area after dark. Noting the *no trespassing sign* the patroller calls 792-6500 (dispatch) and reports the trespassers and watches the group from a safe distance until the police arrive

**APPROPRIATE ACTION:** By calling dispatch and staying a safe distance away, you are keeping yourself safe and you will be able to assist the police with descriptions.

**This does not encompass every situation but it should give you a good working knowledge about what is and what is not expected on Watch patrol.**

**Thank you for your help and please stay safe!**

# Home Security & Theft Prevention

## BASIC HOME SECURITY

### 1. Address Markings

- Clearly visible from street for emergency personnel
- Easy to read, good contrast with the background and can be spotted at night when lighted at night.
- Do not use script numbers or any numbers written out. (Ex. Eight Hundred Twenty-two)
- Numbers should be at least 4" tall

### 2. Landscape

- Keep shrubbery trimmed, do not block windows or doors or create hiding areas for criminals.
- Keep your lawn well kept.
- Make sure landscaping does not interfere with lighting

### 3. Deadbolts & Locks

- Make sure you have a deadbolt on every exterior door in your home.
- Use your locks!! Even when your home, lock your doors!
- Keep windows locked
- Keep garage doors closed and secured

### 4. Lighting

- At the very least keep your front and rear porch lights on at night.
- Use timers inside the home.
- Use Motion sensor lights or light sensitive lights outside.

### 5. Vacation Hints

- Have your home looking lived in.
- Stop all deliveries
- Leave a key with a trusted friend or neighbor.

### 6. Operation ID

- List property noting serial numbers, make, model and color
- Engrave your property with an identifying number if the serial number is unknown. (ex. VA and driver license number or telephone number)
- Photograph all property, including jewelry and collectibles

## THEFT PREVENTION

1. Do not leave bicycles outside unattended.
2. Keep your vehicle locked at all times and use an anti-theft device.
3. Remove all valuables from your vehicle or put them out of sight, such as in the trunk

# A Crime Connection

## Incorporate Pet Watch

### THE CONNECTION

- Animal abuse also often goes hand-in-hand with other crimes Neighborhood Watch seeks to prevent.
- Psychologists acknowledge a connection between human-on-human abuse and animal cruelty.
- Cruel tendencies often begin in childhood or adolescence. A 1999 report by the Humane Society of the United States noted that more than half of the juvenile assailants in recent school shootings were known to have persistently abused animals.
- A 1997 survey of 50 shelters found that 85 percent of battered women entering the facilities reported incidents of pet abuse in their families.
- Crimes such as dogfighting and cockfighting are frequently gang related and linked to drug use, weapons violations, and illegal gambling.

### SITUATIONS YOU COULD FIND IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

#### • HOARDING

Someone who keeps an abnormally large number of animals but fails to provide minimal nutrition, veterinary care, shelter, or sanitation. Red flags: an occupied dwelling that is deteriorated (e.g., holes in wall, extreme clutter), reeks of ammonia, or shows signs of flea and vermin infestation, especially if emaciated, lethargic, or feral animals are sighted nearby.

#### • ALL ALONE: NEGLECT AND ABANDONMENT

Neglect occurs when an owner fails to provide for an animal's basic needs. In some cases, neglect stems from ignorance or financial hardship. Neglect and abandonment affect livestock as well as companion animals.

#### • FIGHTING

Title 18, Section 48, of the U.S. code makes dogfighting a federal crime, the brutal "sport" has surged in popularity with the rise in gang membership. Signs of dogfighting include fighting breed dogs (e.g., pit bulls) chained up within a few feet of each other (to promote aggression); treadmills or weights (to exercise the animals); large numbers of kennels (to transport dogs to fight locations); and splattered blood or fur remnants. Like dogfighting, cockfighting has become popular in the U.S. and is often associated with a bigger criminal enterprise that can be linked to illegal gambling, stolen vehicles and weapons, a marijuana operation, and a methamphetamine lab. Cockfighting is difficult to control, especially in immigrant communities whose residents come from countries where this activity is legal and culturally accepted. Provide law enforcement or animal control officers with the date and time the event occurred, the address or location, and their reasons for suspicion.

# Pet Watch Guidelines

*Properly cared for pets bring joy to our lives and help cement the bond with friends and neighbors.*

## **KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD'S PETS**

Be alert to the cats and dogs that live nearby. Consider creating a pet roster that includes owners' names and phone numbers, basic descriptions of each animal, and tag numbers for use in emergencies.

## **WATCH FOR ABANDONMENT AND NEGLECT**

Warning signs may include a dog tethered to a tree without food or water, sick animals, hoarding, or abandoned pets. Also look out for pets left in parked cars during hot weather and outdoor animals without access to shelter.

## **THEFT**

A rise in the number of missing pets and "lost pet" signs may indicate thieves at work. Contact animal shelters and law enforcement if you suspect foul play.

## **LEND A HELPING HAND**

Pets can be a source of joy to older and infirmed people. However, physical limitations may prevent owners from caring for their four-legged companions. Offering to feed and walk pets or transport pets to veterinary appointments can help ease the burden.

## **WALK ON THE WILD SIDE**

Loss of habitat and encroachment has led to more frequent human-wild animal encounters. Neighborhood Watch members should report suspected wild animal abuse as well as illegal hunting and trapping. Atypical behaviors (e.g., a raccoon foraging during daylight, a fox that is unafraid of people) may be signs of rabies and should also be reported immediately.

## **REPORT**

All animals, from the family hound to the soaring hawk, rely on humans to advocate for their welfare. In fact, most cases of animal abuse and neglect are discovered when a concerned neighbor sees, hears, or smells something suspicious and takes the initiative by contacting law enforcement or animal control.

## **CREATE ANIMAL FRIENDLY AREAS**

Setting up a neighborhood dog park is a great way for neighbors to meet each other. This can help create stronger ties, strengthen the neighborhood watch and enhance the quality of life within the community.

## **INFORMATION**

**Prince William County Animal Shelter** 703-792-6465\* (\*After 5 p.m., please call 703-792-6500)

[www.pwccgov.org/police](http://www.pwccgov.org/police)

**American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)** ([www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org))

**Animal Legal Defense Fund** ([www.aldf.org](http://www.aldf.org))

**Humane Society of the United States** ([www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org))

**Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium** ([www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/index.html](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/index.html))

**www.Pet-Abuse.com** (a searchable database of animal cruelty cases)

**www.pets911.com** (a clearinghouse for information on shelters, licensing, and adoption; includes a database of lost and found animals)

# Emergency Preparedness

- ❖ Know how you can help your neighbors
- ❖ Assist neighbors with special needs / situations
- ❖ Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home

## CREATE AN EMERGENCY/DISASTER PLAN

Meet with your family; discuss the types of disasters and what to do in each case.

## DETERMINE WHERE TO MEET:

- A place right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency like a fire
- A place outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Make sure everyone has the address and phone number.

## HAVE AN OUT-OF-TOWN CONTACT

- Have an out-of-town friend or relative be your contact.
- Family members should call this contact and tell them where they are if an emergency arises.
- Everyone must know the contact number, cell phone number and 'land line' phone number.

## ASSEMBLE A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs and those of your family members for three to five days.

- Three to five day supply of water and food.
- Include a manual can opener.
- One change of clothing and footwear.
- One blanket or sleeping bag for each person.
- First aid kit with prescriptions, medications, contacts or eyeglasses.
- Emergency tools including a battery powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries
- Extra set of car keys, credit card, cash or travelers checks.
- Sanitation supplies including toilet paper, soap, garbage bags.
- Special items for infants, elderly or disabled family members.
- Important family documents in a waterproof containers.
- Tools and supplies (utility knife, hammer, matches, duct tape, etc.)
- Entertainment (games, books)

# Emergency Preparedness for your Pet

## **MOST SHELTERS DON'T ACCEPT PETS**

Prepare a list of kennels, friends or family members who are able to care for your pet. If you chose a kennel make sure they have an adequate disaster plan.

## **IF YOU MUST LEAVE YOUR PET**

Confine it to a specific room in the house.

Provide plenty of food and water to sustain the animal while you're away.

## **EMERGENCY DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT FOR PETS:**

- Airline-approved carrier for each pet.
- ID with photo, vaccination records and registration, special needs list, medicines, collar and leashes.
- Supply of pet food and clean water.
- Disposable containers or bowls, manual can opener, trash bags, paper towels.

For more information on the Prince William County Emergency Pet Shelter, local pet friendly hotels and other resources available during an emergency contact:

Prince William County Animal Control Bureau  
14807 Bristow Rd.  
Manassas, VA 20112  
703-792-6465  
703-792-6500

For more information on emergency preparedness for pets call the Humane Society of the United States at 202-452-1100 or visit their Web site at [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org).

# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***What can our community do about solicitors?***

There are situations in which door to door activity is not restricted. Some examples are co-op sales related to farm produce, newspapers, firewood and Christmas trees. Also political party or candidate activity and charitable, educational or religious activity are not restricted. Most private entities are required to obtain a permit. Door to door activity is not permitted one half hour after sunset to one half hour before sunrise. Signs that prohibit soliciting are not enforceable. The police can enforce signs that prohibit trespassing. Contact the non-emergency number 703-792-6500 to report a trespasser / solicitor.

***Trespassing:*** Property owners may prohibit persons from trespassing on their property, but the person must first be put on notice. Signs are enforceable. Verbal, in-person notice will suffice. Witten notice, personally served on the party, is optimal.

## ***People speed in our neighborhood, what can be done?***

Contact the Traffic Safety HotLine at 703-792-5919.

If interested in participating in the Community Speed Watch Program contact 703-792-5919. This program is a means to assist residential neighborhoods in deterring speeding in their communities. Participating volunteers operate a stationary radar unit equipped with a visual display board that reminds passing motorists of their travel speed, thus encouraging compliance with posted speed limits.

## ***Can I shoot someone if they are trying to break into my house?***

This is a very complicated subject. Use of force is generally illegal and is allowed only within very narrow limits. You should also realize that there are a number of other legal risks involved in your choice to use force. **Deadly force** is force that is likely to cause death or serious physical injury; for example, use of a gun, knife or baseball bat. **Non-deadly force** is anything less; for example, punching or shoving someone. There are four situations that the use of force against another person is "legally justified," and each has specific guidelines that must be met to avoid criminal liability: Self-defense - Defense of another person - Prevention of certain crimes - Law enforcement. The decision to use deadly force is particularly grave and should be weighed carefully, preferably before you decide to arm yourself.

## ***Is there a curfew in Prince William County?***

It is unlawful for anyone 17 years of age or less to be or remain in any public place between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. Sunday through Thursday, and between the hours of 11:59 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday. There are certain circumstances that may exempt some juveniles from this ordinance. Contact the Police Department for more information.

## ***Do I have to patrol for Neighborhood Watch?***

Formal Neighborhood Watch Patrol is not a requirement but it is encouraged. Patrolling the neighborhood ensures neighbors are being "watchful" for suspicious activity. It provides a visible deterrent to criminals, keeps people involved in the program and helps the police by using their familiarity with the area to identify suspicious activity.

Another option to formal patrolling is "passive" patrolling. This type of patrolling occurs during you and your neighbor's daily activities. This can be done when going for a walk, jogging, driving through the community on your way home from work, etc.