

Shoreline Police Neighborhood Block Watch Handbook

THE CITY OF SHORELINE



"TAKE A STAND AGAINST CRIME"





A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to your community Block Watch Program. Each of you has worked very hard to ensure your home and neighborhood is a safe place to live and you are to be complimented for your efforts! Block Watch has proven over time that it reduces the number of crimes committed in a neighborhood and it increases the quality of life for the community. I am proud to say we now have over 125 active Block Watch Programs in Shoreline.

Having a low crime rate is important but feeling safe and secure in your home and community is much more important. Block Watch helps us achieve that goal. Block Watch is a perfect forum for you to become acquainted with your neighbors so you will feel comfortable reporting if any thing looks suspicious. We must continue to work together to prevent crime in this great community.

We encourage neighbors to call and report suspicious activity so problems can be prevented. By keeping an eye out for your neighbors you can rest assured they will do the same for you. You are the experts on what is happening in your neighborhood and we rely on you to be our eyes and ears. We need you and your neighbors to be our partners so we can collectively solve problems and prevent crime. Your Shoreline Police Department will continue to provide support and ongoing communication with your Block Watch association.

Again, thank you for your involvement in the Block Watch Program and for helping make Shoreline a safer place to live. Please call upon your Community Storefront Police Officers or me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tony Burtt
Chief of Police
Shoreline Police Department
(206) 546-6730
tony.burtt@metrokc.gov

WHAT IS BLOCK WATCH?

A Block Watch is the single most important feature that will help you reduce crime in your neighborhood. A Block Watch is formed by a group of neighbors who are interested in mutual protection against burglary. These neighbors agree to watch out for one another's homes and report unusual incidents to the police.

Since 1974, many residents have been actively and successfully working to reduce burglary in their neighborhoods. The many hundreds of Neighborhood Block Watch Groups have worked together to prevent the ever-increasing crime of burglary.

A Shoreline Community Police Officer from one of our Storefront Offices will speak at your meeting about how to better secure your homes and property. Neighbors will be encouraged to engrave their property. Once 60% of participants have completed the engraving, stickers showing the operation I.D. emblem will be provided. These can be placed in the windows of your homes. In addition, Block Watch signs can also be provided.

These signs will alert everyone to the fact that "This is a Block Watch Protected Neighborhood."

PREPARATION BEFORE A BLOCK WATCH MEETING

1. First, decide if you will host the Block Watch meeting in your home, a neighbor's home or other community site (library, school, etc.) A Block Watch meeting should include neighbors living on both sides of the street; and, if possible, homes behind.
2. Contact your Shoreline Community Police Officer to schedule a meeting time that is convenient for you and the Community Police Officer. The typical starting time for the meeting is between 6 and 7 p.m. The meeting lasts approximately 1-1/2 hours.
3. Invitations to the meeting should be delivered 5 to 7 days in advance of the meeting. At the time the invitations are delivered, a list of names, addresses and phone numbers of all the neighbors should be recorded.
4. On the day of the Block Watch meeting, all of the invited neighbors should be re-contacted by phone or e-mail to remind them of the meeting.

HOLDING YOUR FIRST BLOCK WATCH MEETING

Once a time and place are established, the first Block Watch meeting should be held. A Community Storefront Police Officer will provide general information, explain the organization of a Block Watch Group, provide Block Watch Handbooks, explain Operation I.D. and show a video. Normally before the first meeting, a Block Watch Captain has volunteered or can be chosen at the meeting. Choosing a Captain can be done through nominations and then voting, or by someone volunteering and then general agreement from those attending. The Block Watch Captain will be responsible for mapping the neighborhood, getting a member list (including name, address, phone number, and e-mail), and organizing a phone tree. The Captain also decides when the next meeting or event will be held.

Within 3 months from the first meeting, the Block Watch Captain should notify the Community Storefront Officer to update them on the status of Operation ID. When 60% of your Block Watch has completed engraving, signs may be provided. Signs are approved of and ordered by the Storefront Officer. Signs are posted for you at no cost through the City. 😊

After the first meeting, meetings or Block Watch events should be held once or twice per year. Refer to the section *"Knowing Your Neighbors: Keeping Your Block Watch Going"* for ideas. Meetings can be held for emergency preparation, general housekeeping issues, or in the case a problem should arise. The Block Watch Captain also acts as a liaison to the Shoreline Police and can always obtain Crime Prevention information from them.

BLOCK WATCH WORKS

Block Watch is an effective crime deterrent—through Operation I.D. and with the use of Crime Watch signs, criminals are notified that this is not the block on which to be criminally active. The Crime Watch signs let the criminal know that someone is watching and when the criminal enters their neighborhood he will be noticed. Operation I.D. stickers let the criminal know that everything of value has been engraved and is therefore easily traced as stolen, making it extremely difficult to pawn. These tools let everyone know that these neighbors are united, educated in today's crime trends, share information, are "nosy", call the police when they see something suspicious, and aggressively prosecute.

WHO TO CONTACT

Shoreline Police Neighborhood Centers

West of Aurora:

Officer Leona Obstler
624 NW Richmond Beach Road
Shoreline, WA 98177
(206) 546-3636

East of Aurora:

Officer Sue Sherwood
521 NE 165th Street
Shoreline, WA 98155
(206) 363-8424

Neighborhood Watch Program

Neighborhood Watch is a program designed to increase security on neighborhood blocks by involving as many individuals and families as possible in a united crime prevention effort. Participants in Neighborhood Watch learn:

- To be familiar with neighbors and activities on the blocks;
- To recognize and report suspicious activity;
- To increase home security;
- To engrave property correctly; and
- To communicate with neighbors on a regular basis using block maps, phone trees, e-mails, newsletters, etc.

Our Mission

We believe that citizens have the right to livable and secure neighborhoods in order to pursue their lives free of fear and crime.

We believe it is the responsibility of citizens to build and maintain livable and cohesive neighborhoods and to support and assist each other in the prevention of crime.

We believe citizen involvement is an integral part of maintaining an effective and vital police service and that it is a proper role of police and other government agencies to provide resources to citizens who are working to improve the livability and safety of their neighborhoods.

We believe that committed citizens and committed police, working cooperatively toward these ends, create a united and secure community and reduce vulnerability to crime.

Our Goals

Goal 1. We will reduce the level of fear of crime in our neighborhoods.

Goal 2. We, as citizens will accept the responsibility to increase neighborhood livability and reduce crime in our neighborhoods.



The First Steps

Know Your Neighbors

One of the first steps of Neighborhood Watch is getting to know your neighbors. Whether you prefer to do so at a block meeting or one-on-one is up to you, but it is important that you share information about the composition of your households and activities. By doing so you make it easier for your block members to recognize and respond to suspicious activities when they occur. The following three resources show suggested ways you can share information with each other.

Block Map. This gives you a visual perspective of your block. It's a handy way to remember who lives where and makes it easy to explain the layout of your block to the 911 operator.

Block Profile. A more detailed record of your block's composition. It includes information such as work schedules, emergency phone numbers, types of vehicles and block skills.

Telephone Tree. An effective method for sharing information between neighbors. Each neighbor is responsible for calling one or two other block members when problems arise.

Discuss strengths and weaknesses of your block with your neighbors including visibility, areas of high daytime vacancy, which has watchdogs, routine activities, etc. Your neighbors should keep their block information records in a safe, accessible place.

The more information you share with each other, the better you are able to recognize when something suspicious is occurring. Most burglars "case out" a neighborhood by paying attention to schedules, activities and alertness of neighbors. If a burglar strives to become familiar with patterns on your block, shouldn't you be familiar with them as well? Even up the odds between you and the potential thief!

Telephone Tree Information

What Is It?

A phone tree is a tool that provides a means of rapid communication on a block. Every household is assigned a few names to call and a short message, which needs to be passed on.

How do you set it up?

Set up your phone tree by putting the names and phone numbers of each household on a form. The block coordinator should be at the top. As new households are brought into the Neighborhood Watch, add their names and numbers at the bottom of the phone tree.

Each household should receive a copy of the phone tree and it should be kept in a safe but accessible place. For convenience, you may want to copy the phone tree onto the backside of your block map.

How Do You Use It?

When someone on the block has information to share, they should activate the phone tree by calling the name at the top (block coordinator). Each household calls the next name(s) just below them on the tree (usually one or two houses). If no one is home, continue the network by calling the next household(s) on the list. Efforts should also continue to call the household that wasn't home.

- Make sure that neighbors without telephones receive the information by making a personal visit to their homes.
- The last households to be contacted should indicate that they received the message by informing the name at the top of the phone tree. This insures that the circle of communication is complete. You may choose to have both home and work numbers on your tree.
- The block is encouraged to practice using the phone tree prior to actually needing it so that any kinks in the process can be remedied.

When Do You Use The Telephone Tree?

After calling 911, alert your neighbors to a criminal act in progress or that has just occurred.

- Alert your neighbors (as well as police) to suspicious activity or persons at the time of occurrence. Use the suggestions given in this manual on reporting suspicious persons or vehicles.
- Pass on information from your Crime Prevention Coordinator about a suspected burglar, rapist, etc. in your area.
- Control rumors about crime in the neighborhood, which you have verified or found false through your Crime Prevention Coordinator.

Non-Emergency Telephone Number

(206) 296-3311

The non-emergency number should be used when reporting any crime that has already occurred that involves no suspect or vehicle such as residential burglaries that have already occurred with no suspect information, thefts from your vehicle, and incidents of vandalism with no suspect information.

Reporting Suspicious Activity To 911

Knowing your neighbors and patterns of your block gives you a basis for recognizing suspicious persons or activities. The next step is to learn how to correctly use the 911 system of reporting correctly, so that you have the best advantage possible in receiving a response to potential and actual problems on your block.

Procedure for Using the 911 System

· When you first dial **911** tell the operator if you need police, fire or medical services. In case of incidents where you require more than one service, first request the service that will maintain life. The other services that are needed will automatically follow.

· Stay on the line until the operator has all the information needed. ***Do not hang up until the operator instructs you to do so.***

Give the operator your name, address, telephone number and a one- or two-sentence description of what you actually see and hear. Let the operator ask you questions to ensure that they receive the information needed to respond to your call. Be specific about what is happening—do not exaggerate the circumstances.

Continue answering the operator's questions so that they may have up-to-date information to relay to the officer. ***It is not necessary for you to hang up before the police can be dispatched.***

Be prepared to answer the following questions, and keep your block map handy to help give exact addresses and directions:

- **What is happening?**
- **When did it happen?**
- **Where is the incident taking place?**
- **Are there weapons involved?**
- **What does the vehicle look like?**
- **What is the license number?**
- **What do the suspects look like?**
- **Which direction are they heading?**

Suspicious Activity

Suspicious Activity can be defined as any person or behavior that is inappropriate or out of the ordinary. Discuss with your neighbors any suspicious activities or individuals you have noticed on the block. Below are some actual examples of neighbors taking action upon seeing what they considered to be suspicious activity:

- At 3 a.m. a woman saw a car pull up at an elderly neighbor's home. One man left the car and disappeared around the corner while a second man stayed behind the wheel with the lights off and the car's engine running. The woman called 911 and the police apprehended the first man breaking into a gas station on the next block.
- Early one Sunday morning a neighbor noticed a man carrying boxes and items of value from a home to a vehicle. Although he didn't recognize the man, the neighbor hesitated calling 911 until he saw the man carry a woman's purse to the car. He called 911 and the man was apprehended burglarizing the neighbors' home while they slept upstairs.
- A woman saw a young man knock on her neighbor's front door. When nobody answered the man went around the side of the house. The woman immediately called 911 and the man was caught burglarizing her neighbor's house.

What to Look For

Some suspicious activity may not be as obvious as the previous examples. Additionally, what is considered suspicious on one block may be normal activity on another. Keep in mind what is not normal for your block. That could be an indication of a crime about to happen. Some other examples include:

<u>CONCERNING VEHICLES</u>	<u>POSSIBLE ACTIVITY</u>
• Slow moving vehicle without lights.....	Possibly casing neighborhood
• Vehicle being loaded with valuables especially if parked by closed business or unoccupied residence.....	Possible burglary in progress
• Abandoned vehicle esp. on blocks.....	Possible stolen car
• Someone being forced into a vehicle, especially females or juveniles	Possible kidnap, assault, attempted rape
• Locked vehicle that someone is attempting to forcibly enter.....	Possible theft of car or contents in progress
• Person detaching mechanical parts or accessories from vehicle.....	Possible theft or vandalism in progress

<u>CONCERNING PERSONS</u>	<u>POSSIBLE ACTIVITY</u>
• Going door-to-door, especially if one or more persons goes to rear of residence.....	Casing, possible burglary in progress
• Loitering in front of a house or business, especially if site is unoccupied.....	Possible burglary suspects
• Person running, especially if carrying items of value.....	Possible suspect fleeing scene of theft
• Person screaming for help.....	Possible rape or assault in progress
• Persons offering items for sale at a very low price.....	Possibly trying to sell stolen items
• Persons coming to your door with requests, especially if yours is the only house approached.....	Possibly casing house or attempting an unusual entry for robbery

Also, look and listen for breaking glass, gunshots, screaming, open or broken doors or windows and any other irregular activity. Remember—you don't call 911 just to report a crime in progress. More criminals are apprehended because citizens reported suspicious activity before a crime occurred. If your intuition tells you something isn't right, call 911 and report your suspicions. It's better to discover that nothing is wrong than to later discover a crime's been committed.

Accurate Terminology

It's important when calling 911 that you are as clear and accurate as possible about what you are observing. In order to be effective you should have a working knowledge of the terminology used by the police and 911 to prioritize crime. To say "I've been robbed!" when in fact you are the victim of a burglary may have an effect on how your situation is responded to. Below is a list of commonly used terms to describe criminal activity:

Assault: Causing injury or attempting to cause injury to another person.

Burglary: Unlawful entry of a structure with intent to commit a felony or any theft. *(Note: a residential burglary is theft from a dwelling. Non-residential burglary is theft from a business, a detached garage or any other non-dwelling).*

Car Prowl: Theft from an automobile, not the theft of an automobile.

Larceny: Theft of property other than by burglary or robbery *(pick pocketing, shoplifting, etc.)*.

Robbery: Taking and carrying away of another's property forcefully or with imminent threat of force with intent of permanently depriving rightful owner of the property *(ea. a stick-up, mugging)*.

Sexual Assault: Forced or non-consented sexual activity by one against another *(not limited to rape or to women)*.

Vandalism: Destruction or defacing of property.



Knowing Your Neighbors

“Keeping Your Block Watch Going”

Stable neighborhoods result from people caring and sharing. Such neighborhoods experience fewer crime problems. When Neighborhood Watch networks organize around crime concerns, enthusiasm is usually high and participation good. A few months later, the excitement dies down and communication often suffers.

The following is a list of suggested projects, to help you keep your Block Watch network alive. The list was compiled from active Neighborhood Watch participants. Add your own ideas to this list based on the composition and interests of your neighborhood. Choose the ones appropriate for your group and have fun!

Information Sharing- Write your own Block Watch newsletter and send it via e-mail. Print a few copies for those neighbors who don't have e-mail. Keep people up to date on crime and non-crime happenings. Remember to respect privacy and time and keep e-mails focused on Block Watch related items.

National Night Out – Sponsored by local police and the National Association of Town Watch www.natw.org, Night Out Against Crime is an annual event always held the first Tuesday night in August. Neighbors and Block Watch groups get together and have BBQ's, potluck desserts, informal gatherings, kid's activities, walks etc. Contact your storefront officer for more information.

Emergency Planning - Develop a preparedness plan for emergencies. Who has a gas stove? Who has a four-wheel drive vehicle? Does anyone have special needs? Does anyone have special skills? Identify the needs and resources on your block. [Contact Shoreline's Emergency Management Coordinator, Gail Marsh, at 206-546-7873 or gail.marsh@metrokc.gov](mailto:gail.marsh@metrokc.gov)

CERT – Community Emergency Response Team. Join with your neighbors to take this course offered by Shoreline Fire Department. CERT prepares citizens to respond to and cope with the aftermath of a disaster. [Contact Shoreline Fire Department Public Information Officer, Melanie Granfors, at 206-533-6500 or mgranfors@shorelinefire.com](mailto:mgranfors@shorelinefire.com)

“Keeping Your Block Going”

Neighborhood Association Delegate- Block residents can attend Council of Neighborhood meetings on a rotating basis. Your block can be part of decision and policy making. Tie this in with your block newsletter or inform neighbors through the telephone tree and e-mail. *Contact the City of Shoreline Neighborhood Coordinator, Nora Smith, at 206-546-8564 or nsmith@ci.shoreline.wa.us*

Block Garage Sale- Buy an ad for the entire block for a big block-wide sale on the same day. You can buy each other's cast-offs.

Group Material Buying- Many nurseries, building supply businesses, etc., will give customers a discount on large orders. Tie this in with your block clean up day.

Carpooling- Share a ride to work, downtown, shopping malls, etc., with a neighbor or two.

Block Inventory- Explore the wealth of talent on your block - auto mechanics, gardeners, artists, those with special talents, etc. Neighbors can share expertise and knowledge with each other.

Thanksgiving or Other Holiday Dinners - Ask a neighborhood church or community center for use of space for a multi-family celebration; share the work and cost.

Block Clean Up – Rent a dumpster for the weekend. Neighbors can share tools and expertise to help one another. End the day with a celebration.

Progressive Dinners- Hors d'oeuvres at one house, salad at the next, soup, main course, etc. Each house has responsibility for one course. The party moves from house to house.

Block Garden- A resident with unused garden space can let others use it in exchange for produce. Celebrate with a harvest festival.

Exercise or Walking Groups - It's easier to pursue fitness with a companion at a regular time. Organize a weight loss competition, perhaps one side of the street vs. the other. Celebrate with a health conscious potluck.

“Keeping Your Block Going”

Support Groups - Young mothers, single parents or seniors may benefit from meeting to share concerns and solutions.

Telephone Reassurance - Establish a system whereby any seniors or shut-ins are telephoned at regular intervals to make certain that everything is all right.

Childcare Co-op - With the aid of your block map and telephone tree, organize a co-op. Parents and children both benefit.

Work Parties - Painting, insulating, yard work, housecleaning, shoveling snow, etc., can be easier, faster and cheaper if neighbors with similar needs do them together,

Goods Exchange - Collect unwanted books, toys or outgrown children's clothing exchange them with neighbors for new "treasures." Before or after the block garage sale may be a good time to do this.

Kids' Parade - If your block has a lot of kids, show them off with a children's parade. Close off your block for the event by calling 546-1700 for instructions. Neighborhood merchants are often willing to donate soft drinks, treats and prizes.

Sign Posting Party - Celebrate community spirit by arranging a party when your Block Watch sign is posted, telling the world that crime will not be tolerated. Let the Neighborhood Block Watch symbol remind the neighbors of the commitment you have made to each other to be watchful and responsive.

Booster Meeting- Invite a crime prevention specialist or the Emergency Management Coordinator for a follow up meeting to help strengthen your resolve in keeping the block crime free. Speakers on various crime prevention topics are available through your neighborhood Crime Prevention Officer.

Block Parties – Can be held in someone's yard or driveway *or* call 546-1700 for instructions on how to get your street blocked off (Right of Way Permit) for a celebration, especially for National Night Out which is always the first Tuesday night in August.



***Shoreline Police
Neighborhood Block Watch
Handbook***

