

Take a stand against crime— join Neighborhood Watch

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH, BLOCK WATCH, Town Watch, Business Watch, Crime Watch—whatever the name, it's one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime and reduce fear. Neighborhood Watch fights the isolation that crime both creates and feeds upon. It forges bonds among area residents, helps reduce burglaries and robberies, and improves relations between police and the communities they serve.

Why Neighborhood Watch?

- It works. Throughout the country, decreases in burglary and related offenses are reported in communities with active Watch programs.
- Many families have two working parents and children involved in many activities that keep them away from home. An empty house in a neighborhood where none of the neighbors know the owner is a prime target for burglary.
- Neighborhood Watch also helps build pride and serves as a springboard for efforts that address other community concerns such as recreation for youth, child care, and affordable housing.

How does a Neighborhood Watch start?

A motivated individual, a few concerned residents, a community organization, a business, or a law enforcement agency can establish a Watch. Together they can:

- Organize a small planning committee of neighbors to discuss needs, the level of interest, and community problems.

- Contact the Minnetonka Police Department for help in training members in home security and reporting skills and for information on local crime patterns.
- Hold an initial meeting to gauge neighbors' interest; establish the purpose of the program; and begin to identify issues that need to be addressed.
- Select a Neighborhood Watch Captain who is responsible for relaying information to members.

Who can be involved?

Any community resident can join. Even the busiest of people can belong to a Neighborhood Watch—they too can keep an eye out for neighbors as they come and go.

What does a Neighborhood Watch do?

- They are extra eyes and ears for reporting crime and helping neighbors.
- Members meet their neighbors, learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and the neighborhood, and report activity that raises their suspicions to the police.

What are Watch member responsibilities?

- Know your neighbors and watch out for each other.
- Be alert! Report suspicious activities and crimes to the police department.
- Learn how you can make yourself and your community safer.

National Night Out coloring contest winners

IN SEPTEMBER, NATIONAL NIGHT OUT coloring contest winners Sloan Sprau (K–3 category, pictured at top) and Audrey Erickson (4–6 category, pictured at bottom) received a ride to school courtesy of Minnetonka Police Chief Mark Raquet, as well as a certificate honoring their achievement. ☺



What are the major components of a Watch program?

- Communication with neighbors, ranging from a weekly e-mail to a monthly newsletter to a neighborhood electronic bulletin board; as well as maintaining regular contact with your police department crime prevention liaison.
- Special events are crucial to keep the program going and growing. Host talks or seminars that focus on current issues crime in schools, teenage alcohol and other drug abuse, or domestic violence. Adopt a park or school playground and paint over graffiti. Sponsor a National Night Out block party, holiday dinner, or volleyball or softball game that will provide neighbors a chance to get to know each other.

For more information about Neighborhood Watch in Minnetonka, contact Nicole Nelson, crime prevention analyst, Minnetonka Police Department, at (952) 939-8546 or at nnelson@eminnetonka.com. ☺

Provisional drivers and cell phones

PROVISIONAL LICENSE HOLDERS, TYPICALLY THOSE WHO HAVE REACHED THE age of 16 but are under the age of 18, are not allowed to operate a motor vehicle while using a cell phone. This includes cell phones with hands-free devices, as well as using a cell phone for text messaging. Provisional license violations may include a fine and may lead to the loss of the license until the holder turns 18.

The only exception to this rule is use of a cell phone during emergency situations or for the purpose of reporting a crime, such as reporting a possible impaired driver, reporting a crime in progress, or when the safety of the driver or another is in immediate jeopardy. ☺

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