

# Safer, Happier, Healthier Communities.

Crime is an unfortunate fact of everyday life, but with some thoughtful collaboration, communities, businesses, and local law enforcement agencies can work together to build partnerships and enhance public safety.

Fortunately, there are many ways that law enforcement and neighborhoods can work together to protect property and loved ones, including simple steps like keeping doors locked, or starting a Neighborhood Watch program.

Here are some valuable tips on what communities can do to help reduce crime while working with local law enforcement to achieve safer, happier, healthier neighborhoods.

## Neighborhood Crime Prevention Tips

Keep spare keys with a trusted neighbor, not hidden under a doormat or in the mailbox. Keep your doors locked whether you are at home or away and never open your door to anyone that you do not know. Keep your garage door closed and locked, even when you are home or in the backyard.

Illuminate or eliminate the places that an intruder might hide, such as the spaces between trees or shrubs, stairwells, alleys, and entry ways. Consider using motion-detection lighting to illuminate your yard or entranceway. Trim shrubbery that obscures the doors or windows of your house.

Half of all home burglaries occur during the day. If you see anyone suspicious walking or driving around your neighborhood, notify the police. Be aware of suspicious activity by thieves who may pose as repair men, construction workers, or service workers. Consider investing in an alarm system for your home

Secure your vehicle. A high percentage of automobile break-ins involve unlocked vehicles. Never leave valuables inside of your vehicle where they can be seen in plain sight.

Know your neighbors. Be familiar with what type of vehicles they drive, whether they have guests staying with them, or if they will be having hired services performed at their homes.

## RESOURCES

The National Crime Prevention Council:

<http://www.ncpc.org>

National Sheriffs' Association:

<http://www.sheriffs.org>

The Bureau of Justice Assistance:

<http://www.bja.gov>

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## Tips For Parents

**Know where your children are.** Have kids tell you or ask permission before leaving the house. Whenever possible, have them leave a phone number of where they will be.

**Memorize important phone numbers.** Have your children recite their home phone number and address, in addition to your work and cell phone numbers, and write them down on a card and have them carry it with them at all times.

**Set limits.** Have a firm sense of where children are and are not allowed to go in neighborhoods. Talk to them about crossing busy roads, playing in alleys, and near abandoned buildings.

**Meet your children's friends,** as well as their parents, before letting your children go to their home and keep a list of phone numbers. If you are unable to meet with their parents, call and talk to them.

**Have a safe house.** Establish a neighbor's house where your children can go if they need help in an emergency. Point out other safe places that they can go for help, such as libraries, fire stations, and police stations.

**Teach kids to settle arguments with words, not fists.** Teach them to talk things out, walk away from fist fights, and what to do when confronted by bullies.

## Establish a Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch is one of the oldest and most effective crime prevention programs in the U.S., bringing citizens and law enforcement together to deter crime and improve community safety. Neighborhood Watch traces its roots back to colonial times, when night watchmen patrolled the streets. The modern version of Neighborhood Watch was developed in response to requests from sheriffs and police chiefs who were looking to actively involve citizens in crime prevention efforts.



## Building a Successful Neighborhood Watch

Work with the police or sheriff's office as a source of necessary information and training. Gather the facts about crime in your area. Check police reports, conduct victimization surveys, and learn residents' perceptions about crime. Accurate information can reduce the fear of crime. Work with your victims' services office to train your members in helping victims of crime. Hold regular meetings to help residents get to know each other and focus on developing strategies and activities.

Consider coordinating with an existing organization, such as a citizens' association, community development office, tenants' association, or housing authority.

Translate crime and drug prevention materials into Spanish or other languages needed by non-English speakers. If necessary, have a translator at meetings.

Sponsor a crime and drug prevention fair at a local gathering place, such as a church hall, temple, or community center. Sponsor community cleanups, encourage residents to beautify the area, addressing abandoned cars and overgrown lots which may contribute to crime.

Start a block parent program to help children prepare for emergencies that may occur while walking to and from school or playing in the area. Ask residents who seldom leave their homes to be "window watchers," looking out for children and reporting any unusual activities in the neighborhood.

Involve local business leaders in coordinated educational efforts with law enforcement and Neighborhood Watch organizations. Work with them to prevent work-site problems, such as property crime, vandalism, substance abuse, and assault.

Emphasize that Neighborhood Watch groups are not vigilantes. Their duty is to encourage neighbors to be alert, observant, and caring—and to report suspicious activity immediately to local law enforcement.



## Start a Conversation

Invite local law enforcement officials into your living room. A living room setting can make for a comfortable and informal setting to have an honest discussion about your concerns and the challenges facing your neighborhood. Invite your neighbors to participate. Use the small group setting to promote an open dialogue and use the opportunity to get to know your local law enforcement officers. Address concerns about neighborhood safety. Ask questions that you might not normally have the opportunity to ask.

## Fostering Positive Youth Outreach

Build a connection between young people and law enforcement. Bring together young members of the community and law enforcement for an open discussion of youth-related topics, including drugs, homelessness, civility, character, and trust. Give youth the opportunity to speak openly and work to build a mutual understanding on those issues.

## Making a Difference Together

Crime is a fact of life, but that doesn't mean that we can't work together to build a safer, happier, healthier sense of community. When neighbors, business leaders, youth, and law enforcement work together, the sum of those contributions equals a better way of life for everyone.