

Form a Block Watch

Block Watch is a program based on the principle that neighbors working together are the first and best line of defense against crime. Block Watch has been shown to be an effective deterrent of crime at the neighborhood level.

All it requires is that you and your neighbors be familiar enough with each other to know who lives in the neighborhood and who doesn't; which cars are a part of the neighborhood and which aren't; recognize when something suspicious is going on and being a little more observant of changes in your surroundings. It also requires that when you see something suspicious, you alert each other and you alert police.

FOUR BASIC ELEMENTS OF A BLOCK WATCH

- Meet your neighbors, so that you know what is usual activity on your block and what is not.
- Create a map of the houses and people on your block with contact information.
- Tell a neighbor when you are going to be away, ask them to pick up mail or packages.
- Be alert for suspicious activity, and report it to 911, and your neighbors.

How do you know what's suspicious in your neighborhood? First, you have to know what's usual for your neighborhood. How do you know what's usual? You get out from behind your doors and you talk to each other. It's your neighborhood, your community. You know (or should know) what is usual for your neighborhood and what is out of place. The more you interact with each other, the more you are observant and engaged, the better able you are to identify those things that are unusual, out of place and suspicious: The things to tell the police by calling 911.

HOW DO I GET A BLOCK WATCH STARTED?

Getting started is pretty easy. Contact the Crime Prevention Coordinator for your area for potential dates and times to have the coordinator meet with you and your neighbors. That information is available at <http://www.seattle.gov/police/prevention/coordinators.htm> .

Once you have a date, place and time that works for you, invite your neighbors to come. It helps to invite all the neighbors in person. The meeting does not necessarily have to be at your home; it could be at the local library, community center, church, a neighbor's home. However, the further away the meeting is held from the individual block, the more likely attendance at the meeting will drop off. The number of households and the size of the area you want to include are up to you. At the meeting, you and the crime prevention coordinator will discuss area crime, crime trends, prevention measures and proactive things neighbors can do to positively impact public safety. The crime prevention coordinator will bring printed resource materials for you and your neighbors. A sign-up sheet gets passed around for neighbors to list their contact information (name, address, phone, email). The sheet becomes the basis for your block watch map or telephone tree.