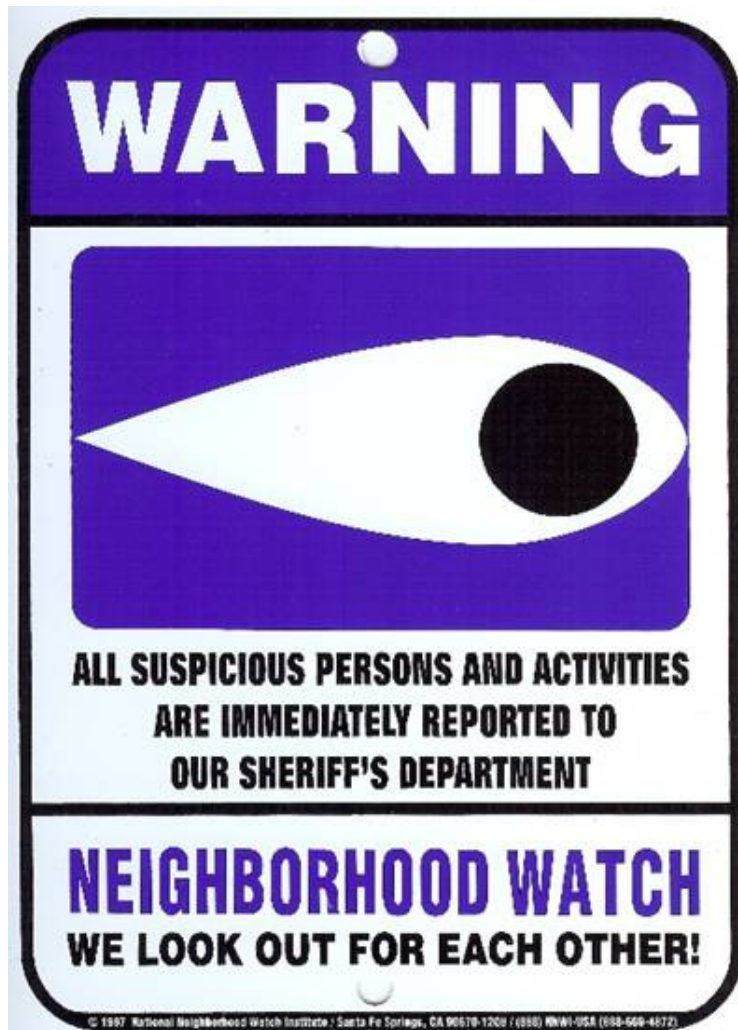


# Neighborhood Watch Information



On top of having a burglar alarm system, a strong asset to have when it comes to home security is having a good relationship with neighbors. A good way to build the relationship between neighbors is through a neighborhood watch program. A neighborhood watch is an organized effort of concerned citizens who are dedicated to crime prevention within a neighborhood. Along with a burglar alarm systems, neighborhood watch programs are proven to be effective crime prevention tools. Here is some information about the benefits and involvement in a neighborhood watch program as well as ways to get one started.

# Benefits of a Neighborhood Watch

A neighborhood watch program offers numerous benefits not only those involved but to the surrounding community as well. Monthly meetings are held where members have a chance to discuss safety and home security issues. Many neighborhood watch organizations involve the local police by inviting them to attend a meeting. The police can provide useful information such as how to reduce the risk of becoming a victim and how to recognize/report suspicious activity going on in the neighborhood. Another benefit of a neighborhood watch program is that members get to know one another and their routines so neighbors can easily identify if something out of the ordinary is going on. With this group effort, members gain the necessary knowledge to increase their home's security and in turn, make the neighborhood more peaceful.



# Getting Involved

It is important for anyone who has moved to a new area, and even for those who have lived in the same area for a long period of time, to get involved with the local neighborhood watch program. Find out from neighbors when the next meeting is scheduled and make a conscious effort to be there. By participating, opinions and concerns are vocalized and relationships between neighbors are strengthened.



# How To Start a Neighborhood Watch

If a neighborhood watch does not currently exist in the area, getting one started is easy. Alert citizens act as the eyes and ears for law enforcement so local police are happy to help anyone willing to take the initiative to get one started. They can provide start up kits and additional information to aid in getting set up. Once all of the information has been gathered, take the time to communicate with neighbors.



Increasing home security and the overall safety of the neighborhood affects everyone around the area. Finding neighbors who are interested in participating should not be hard. Gather contact information from everyone who wants to be involved and schedule an initial meeting. At this meeting, go over goals that should be accomplished by having the neighborhood watch in place. Finally, encourage continued participation to ensure that the neighborhood watch will be an ongoing organization.



# Security Tip: Glass Around Entry Doors

Windows and glass panels fill a home with daylight and in turn, make the environment of the home more inviting. For this reason, many homeowners opt to install glass panels in front doors and sidelights in entryways. Even though glass panels and sidelights are visually appealing, they are not the safest choice when it comes to home security. Burglars look for homes that have glass in or around the front door because if they can break the glass, they gain access to the rest of the home by simply reaching in and unlocking the door from the inside. Fortunately there are a few options to further protect these areas without having to eliminate glass in the entryway.

In homes that are designed with glass in doors or sidelights in entry halls, homeowners can consider installing two sided deadbolts. With a two-sided deadbolt, a key is needed to unlock the door from both the outside and the inside. Two-sided deadbolts are good for keeping burglars from gaining access to the rest of the home, but they can put the family in a compromised position. If there happens to be a fire or another emergency in the home, a two-sided deadbolt is dangerous to have. If family members need to get out of the home quickly, they will not have time to be fumbling for a key.



# **Security Tip: Landscaping Affects Home Security**

Landscaping is a large part of a good home security plan. Intruders scoping out a place to target look for a home that provides the biggest advantage to their escape. Things such as tall shrubs and trees, and little to no outdoor lighting all pose potential threats. Fortunately there are many small changes that can be made to landscaping in order to increase home security and still be aesthetically pleasing.

- It is important to mow the lawn regularly. A yard that is un-kept suggests to thieves that the owners are away.
- Tree branches can be used as a ladder for the intruder to climb into a window or a skylight. Although this is a big risk, completely eliminating trees is not necessary. Instead, keep trees trimmed back from the house.
- Trim back shrubs growing near doors and walkways so that the path to enter and exit the house is never blocked. Shrubs should be kept at 3 feet or shorter in height so as not to provide a hiding place for an intruder.
- Deter thieves from entering through windows by planting thorny bushes around them. Plants with thorns protect like barbed wire, while being visually attractive.
- Keep fence gates locked or latched at all times.
- Do not leave ladders out in plain view because they can be used to reach high windows. Instead, keep ladders locked up in the garage or storage shed.
- Keep the yard well lit by investing in good exterior lighting such as motion detecting lights or body heat sensing lights.
- Landscaping has a direct impact on home security. Deter intruders and improve home security by making a few alterations and maintaining well kept landscaping.

# Common Mistakes

More often than not, thieves go for the easy target. Without thinking about it, homeowners can actually make common mistakes that lure a thief in rather than deflecting their attention. Realizing these mistakes and doing something to correct them will increase home security and help from becoming a target.

## Hiding Keys

- Being locked out of the house is a common concern. In order to calm this worry, homeowners hide extra house keys underneath a doormat or rock, in a mailbox, or in a potted plant. It is extremely unsafe to hide keys this close to the home. Experienced thieves know where to look for hidden keys. Instead of hiding keys in easy to find places, a much safer idea is to use a lock box that needs a combination to be opened.

## Broken Locks

- Intruders will go to any means possible in order to get into a targeted house.
- Keep all possible entries to the home secure at all times by promptly fixing broken locks. Just because the broken lock is on the second or third level of the home does not mean that the burglar will not find a way to get up there.

