



**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PLANNING**  
SDPD Neighborhood Policing Resource Team  
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**CONTENTS**

**WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?  
HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM**

Decades ago crime rates across the U.S. increased at an alarming pace. Citizens and law enforcement agencies focused on developing crime prevention programs to help reduce this growing trend. In 1972 The National Sheriff's Association organized the National Neighborhood Watch Program. This pilot program was funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the U.S. Department of Justice and was designed to enlist the participation of citizens with law enforcement to help reduce and prevent crime. Since then Neighborhood Watch has become one of the most effective means of fighting crime in our communities. This is because you and your neighbors are the ones who really know what is going on in your area, most likely to be the first to see a crime and call for help, and are in the best position to:

- Report code violations, unsafe street conditions, etc. that degrade the quality of life in your area,
- Take property owners to small claims court to abate nuisances,
- Keep your block clean and free of graffiti, and
- Provide a safe environment for your children.

This paper defines Neighborhood Watch and explains how to start and maintain a program on your block.

**WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?**

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that enlists the active participation of residents in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime, solve problems, and improve the quality of life in your area. In it you will get to know and work with your neighbors, and learn how to:

- Recognize and report crimes and suspicious activities,
- Protect yourself, your family, and your property,
- Protect your neighbor's family and property, and
- Identify crime and disorder problems in your area and work with SDPD personnel to solve them.

**HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM**

The following steps explain how to get a Neighborhood Watch program started and maintained in your area:

**1. Talk to your neighbors.** See if there's interest in forming a Neighborhood Watch group in your area. If there is contact the SDPD for help.

**2. Talk to the SDPD.** Contact the SDPD area station in your neighborhood and ask to talk to the Community Relations Officer (CRO) who is responsible for Neighborhood Watch. SDPD division addresses and phone numbers are listed at the end of this paper. The CRO will suggest how you should proceed and discuss the crime and disorder problems that you will have to deal with.

**3. Talk to your neighbors again.** Tell them about the benefits of a program and the problems to be addressed. Ask about convenient times and places for the first meeting. Be sure to mention that Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings or personal risks, and that a CRO will be invited to the first meeting to answer questions.

**4. Planning the first meeting.** Select a date, time, and place for the first meeting. Invite the CRO. Meetings are usually held at a home, school, church, or community center. They can also be held at a SDPD area station or storefront office. Send out meeting announcements a few weeks ahead of the date. You can distribute fliers, make phone calls, or send e-mails. Send out reminders a few days before the meeting.

Prepare an agenda and sign-in sheet for the first meeting. Ask the CRO to talk about the crime and disorder problems in your area, how to get crime and crime prevention information on the SDPD website at [www.sandiego.gov/police](http://www.sandiego.gov/police), and how the partnership with the SDPD will work. The meeting should last about one hour. Consider providing refreshments, e.g., cookies and coffee. The agenda should allow time for questions, answers, and other topics.

**5. First meeting.** The first meeting is critical in forming of a group. All attendees should introduce themselves and sign a sheet with their names, addresses, home and cell phone numbers, and e-mail addresses so they can be contacted about future meetings and activities. They should be assured that their personal information will not be given to anyone without their permission. The CRO will talk about the topics listed above and answer questions. Then the group should define the area to be covered and select a Block Captain or Co-Captains.

The area covered by a group in a neighborhood with single-family homes can range from several homes on one side of a street to several blocks with homes on both sides of the streets. The area can also include neighborhood parks, canyons, etc. The area covered in a neighborhood with apartment complexes can range from a single complex to several complexes.

The initial duties of the Block Captain or Co-Captains are listed below:

- Compile a membership list
- Develop an area map with home addresses
- Collect money for Neighborhood Watch signs, and post and maintain the signs

Neighborhood Watch signs and sign hardware approved by the SDPD can be obtained from CSI Signs at **(858) 277-3858**. It is located at 7450 Ronson Rd., San Diego 92111. You can see its signs on its website at [www.csisigns.com](http://www.csisigns.com). Click on View Full Portfolio and then on Neighborhood Watch Aluminum. There you can also download a one-page Neighborhood Watch Order Form to complete and mail, fax, or bring in the CSI Signs. Or you can order Neighborhood Watch signs and other materials online from the National Neighborhood Watch Institute at [www.nnwi.org](http://www.nnwi.org). Neighborhood Watch groups are free to buy signs from any company and do not need SDPD authorization to do so. Signs can be installed with permission on private property or utility poles, with perforated metal tape on City street light poles, or at least 7 feet above the grade level on City street signs. They cannot be installed on any traffic control sign or city tree. After installation the exposed bolt threads should be crimped to prevent theft of the sign.

**6. Continuing duties of the Block Captain or Co-Captains.** After the group is formed their duties will depend on their organizational skills and interests, and the nature and objectives of the group. The following are some possibilities

- Recruit new members
- Maintain a membership list and area map with home addresses
- Keep members informed about area crime and disorder
- Try to see group members frequently
- Establish and maintain phone number and e-mail address trees that group members can use to contact residents in an emergency
- Develop an area activity profile to help members recognize unusual or suspicious activities in the area. This could include vehicle descriptions, work hours, school hours for children, and scheduled services, e.g., gardening
- Act as a spokesperson for the group
- Serve as liaison with the SDPD

- Plan, announce, and facilitate meetings
- Organize crime prevention activities, e.g., watching homes when residents are away

**7. Subsequent meetings and activities.** Meetings of the whole group should be held at least once a year. They can be held more often if there is information to be distributed and discussed, a problem to address, or a special event to be planned and held. The key to keeping a Neighborhood Watch group active is maintaining interest over time and communicating with members.

Meetings can be scheduled to discuss specific crime prevention or other topics. The SDPD can also provide officers to talk on domestic violence, workplace violence, gangs, child and adult abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, identity theft, landlord/tenant relations, bike safety, homeland security, etc. Check with your CRO first and then call the Speaker’s Bureau at **(619) 446-1018** to request a talk.

Meetings can also be scheduled to address a serious incident in the area, or two or more less-serious incidents of the same type. Problem solving usually proceeds in the following steps:

- Definition.** What is the problem? Some examples are car break-ins and thefts, home burglaries, speeding, unlicensed solicitors, graffiti, panhandling, and trash dumping.
- Analysis.** What are the common elements of the problem? They could be time of day, location, kinds of offenders and victims, kinds of targets, access to targets, methods of defeating security measures, etc.
- Response.** How can the problem be addressed? What can be done to prevent recurrence or reduce the damage if it does recur? What agencies or organizations are responsible and should help in solving the problem? What are the best things to do for short- and long-term results?
- Assessment.** Did the problem go away? Was the damage reduced? If not, what else should be done?

Special events are another good way to keep the group active. The following are some possibilities:

- Neighborhood walks to identify potential crime and disorder problems
- Socials, e.g., parties or potluck dinners
- Cleaning streets, vacant lots, canyons, parks, etc.
- Graffiti paint outs
- Fund raising to buy signs, e.g., by collecting recyclables
- Bicycle safety and licensing rodeo
- Painting address numbers on curbs and alley fences or garages

**SDPD AREA STATIONS**

Central	2501 Imperial Ave. SD 92102	(619) 744-9500
Eastern	9225 Aero Dr. SD 92123	(858) 495-7900
Mid-City	4310 Landis St. SD 92105	(619) 516-3000
Northeastern	13396 Salmon River Rd. SD 92129	(858) 538-8000
Northern	4275 Eastgate Mall SD 92037	(858) 552-1700
Northwestern	12592 El Camino Real SD 92130	(858) 523-7000
Southeastern	7222 Skyline Dr. SD 92114	(619) 527-3500
Southern	1120 27th St. SD 92154	(619) 424-0400
Western	5215 Gaines St. SD 92110	(619) 692-4800