

Neighborhood Watch Programs

A neighborhood watch is a program in which all the people who live in one area agree to watch out for each other. So if one of your neighbors notices a suspicious character hanging around your house, or a car that keeps driving up and down your block, they will notify you and contact the police. Criminals are warned of an active watch by signs that are posted prominently in the area. When they see these clear signals that the people in this community are working together to prevent crime, they will know their chances of being caught are much higher and go somewhere else.

Crime Prevention Begins With You

To get your own neighborhood watch together, set up a meeting and invite everyone who lives around you as well as representatives from your local police department. Try going door to door to either tell people personally or create a small flier that announces the time, location and intent of this meeting. On the night you do meet, explain to everyone the benefits of working together to watch over each other's property, and allow a police officer to speak to the group. The officer will be able to offer great tips and training that will help you protect your neighborhood more efficiently. It's a good idea to have someone who can speak English and Spanish present so they can translate to residents who are not bilingual.

One final thing that is important to remember - although people who are part of a local watch group can help prevent crime, they are not trained to stop a criminal. Stress to the members of your watch group that they are not taking on the job of a law enforcement officer, they are working with the rest of your neighbors to keep an eye on each other. Your group should work together to help deter crime, warn others of potential danger, but never put themselves at risk by trying to stop a crime on their own. If any criminal activity is spotted, the best thing to do is call the police immediately.

Preventing Crime

It's true that anyone can become a victim of crime, but there are some very basic things that you can do to deter criminals from choosing you. People generally think of their homes as safe havens where the outside world can not get to them, but statistics constantly show that crime and home invasions are on the rise all over the United States. Do what you can to make your home as safe as possible. It all starts by becoming more active with your neighborhood.

Crime In Your Neighborhood

One of the best ways to ensure that a burglar does not target your house for a break in is to make your entire block a highly secure area. This involves working with your neighbors so that everyone watches out for each other. Think of your block as a mini community, and you can rely on your neighbors to keep you safe just as much as they can rely on you.

Meet the people who live nearby, and get to know their names, what cars they have and exchange phone numbers. Keep a list of this contact information near a phone, so you can call anyone on your block should the need arise. Consider starting an official Neighborhood Watch Group and working with local law enforcement agencies to help watch over everyone in your neighborhood.

Watch For Strangers

Once you get to know the people around you, you will be better prepared to notice strangers who seem to be hanging around a lot. Seeing someone you don't know walk down your street

once is not at all unusual, but if that same person were to be lingering and going back and forth on your block frequently, they may be casing the neighborhood and looking for a home to rob.

Similarly, if you note an unfamiliar car that is spending a lot of time driving on your street, it could be an indication that criminals are looking for potential targets. Warn a neighbor if you see someone looking at their home, and don't be afraid to call the police to report suspicious behavior. As it is often said, the best way to avoid being victimized by crime is to prevent it from happening.

Get Involved In Community Youth Groups

Much of the crime that occurs in residential areas is carried out by kids who are just bored and looking for a thrill. To some younger people, the idea of smashing a window, grabbing a few valuables and running off is exciting and adventurous. After school programs such as youth sports teams can provide a great alternative for potentially maladjusted youths who can benefit from the social aspect, learn to cooperate with others and stay out of trouble.

Deter Criminals From Choosing Your Home

Even a well watched neighborhood can be struck by crime. A burglar looks for the easiest target possible, so it is up to you to make your house difficult to break into. The first step is keeping exterior and interior lights on during the night. Criminals prefer a cover of darkness, and will gravitate towards a home that has no lights on at all.

When you go out for the night, keep a television on, or play a radio inside the house. This will give the appearance that someone is still home, which is a great deterrent to criminals. Experts often recommend choosing a talk station for the radio to give the impression that a conversation is taking place inside. A law breaker may still attempt to break into your home if they become reasonably certain they can do so without being noticed. Continue on to the second part of this article to find out some methods of making sure they can't get in.

Criminals have developed methods of breaking into most any home or building, but even a highly experienced law breaker will only devote a very short time to getting inside. The longer it takes for them to make their way in, the better the chances are that someone might see them and call the police. You can take steps to make it not worthwhile for a criminal choose your house by beefing up your security measures.

Make Your Home A Fortress

Burglars look for any easy entrance to a home. A pet door, busted window or unlocked point of access will let them get in quickly. Walk around your house and examine it to make sure there are no vulnerable points that law breakers can use to force their way inside. Fix broken windows, busted locks and any other part of your house that is not secure immediately.

Security windows are designed to not be breakable, so installing them will make your home more of a stronghold. You can even purchase bullet proof glass for extra security. These items can get expensive, so a good alternative is to install a second lock on the window. You can find them at any retail location that sells hardware products, and they do not cost much.

Other areas to reinforce with extra locks and deadbolts are the front and back doors. A criminal may take the time to break or disable one lock on a door, but they will think twice about messing with one that has multiple security devices. Glass sliding doors can also be better secured with a security bar. A solid bar will prevent a door from being opened, and it can not be moved from

the outside. You can also find steel pins that lock into place at the bottom of a sliding door to make it impossible to open.