

Neighborhood Watch Handbook



Lane County Sheriff's Office
125 E. 8th Avenue
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NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of Neighborhood Watch is to reduce crime by working with your neighbors and your local law enforcement agency in effort to learn about and practice crime prevention measures. By getting to know your neighbors and looking out for each other, you can help prevent crime and make your neighborhood safer.

This guide is provided to you by the Lane County Sheriff's Office. We hope that you will utilize the recommendations in this handbook and on the [National Neighborhood Watch](#) website as you and your neighbors work to reduce crime in your neighborhood.

As a law enforcement agency, we provide crime prevention information and guidance on how to reduce crime in your neighborhood by helping you organize your crime prevention efforts with your neighbors under the concept of the Neighborhood Watch program.

Neighborhood Watch groups are private organizations and are not authorized agents of the Lane County Sheriff's Office. The Lane County Sheriff's Office provides information to community members about National Neighborhood Watch – a division of the National Sheriffs' Association, but is not responsible for the actions of Neighborhood Watch groups or individuals within those groups.

The Sheriff's Office can help you start a crime prevention group using Neighborhood Watch concepts. This guide provides information that is specific to Lane County and how to start a group within your area.

HOW TO START A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IN YOUR AREA

Making the decision to start a Neighborhood Watch group is the first step in helping keep your community safe. Groups should have a Group Representative that will communicate needs or concerns with the Sheriff's Office, and bring information from the Sheriff's office back to the group. This person is usually the one who initiates the introductory meeting.

1. Get together with your neighbors and determine if there is interest in starting a group in your area. Be sure to let them know that Neighborhood Watch does NOT require patrolling or attending lengthy meetings!
2. Determine a good date, time and place for a meeting to introduce Neighborhood Watch to your neighbors.
3. Work with your group members to determine areas of crime prevention to focus on or goals for the group. Develop an action plan to help you reach those goals.
4. Create a method for your group to communicate with each other in emergency situations and non-emergency situations.
5. Communicate regularly with each other through periodic meetings, email, or group text.

GUIDELINES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH SIGNS

The Lane County Sheriff's Office does not provide signs for Neighborhood Watch. Neighborhood Watch signs may be ordered online from National Neighborhood Watch institute at <http://www.nnwi.org>, or from a variety of other online retailers. There are a variety of colors and logos available.

1. Before pole holes are dug contact: **“Call before you dig” at 1-800-332-2344**
2. Signs must be placed on private property
3. Sign pole can be 4X4 treated wood or smaller
4. Signs should be securely mounted on plywood and placed high enough to discourage vandalism

5. Signs must not be attached to power poles
6. If poles/signs are placed at an intersection they must be at least 25 feet from each street
7. Refer to sign form to order in the form section of this handbook
8. The signs must be kept out of right of way.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUP STRUCTURE

What is a Block Watch?

- A Block Watch is another name for Neighborhood Watch, or can be a smaller subsection of a larger group. A Block Watch consists of concerned neighbors on 1 or 2 streets or neighbors near one another.
- Block Watches are a valuable way of maintaining a secure and safe neighborhood.
- Block Watch is a great way to get to know and care about your neighbors and community.

How it works

- Each group will have a Group Representative that maintains and manages the group, schedules group meetings, communicates with the Sheriff's Office about concerns or questions, and keeps a list of group members.
- Group members should discuss ways to communicate with each other in emergency situations (telephone or group text) and in non-emergency situations (email). For emergencies, please dial 911 before activating phone or text trees.
- Neighbors share safety issues with each other, ranging from speeding traffic to recent burglaries that cause neighborhood or individual concern.
- Block Watch members notice suspicious activity when they are taking walks, riding bikes, while in their yards and by watching from their windows or any other routine activity that allows them to observe the neighborhood.
- Members report suspicious activity and crimes to the Sheriff's Office (or your local law enforcement agency if not the Sheriff's Office) and each other.
- Regular group meetings may be held anywhere from once a month (during heavier criminal activity) to once every six months (just to stay in touch). It is always more fun and productive to meet around food and an activity like a planned speaker or a special neighborhood function. Decide how often your group will meet and where. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss the activity and needs in your neighborhood, and to plan future meetings and speakers.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PATROL GUIDELINES

Patrols are not required by Neighborhood Watch. Patrol steps beyond the front porch and out into the neighborhood. Neighborhood Watch members volunteer to walk or drive their neighborhoods as a crime prevention tool. Patrol members have specific requirements to maintain safety. Please review the following if you are planning a patrol for your group:

- **Neighborhood Watch is an observe and report program.** Do not attempt to enforce traffic or criminal laws. If you observe a crime, please contact your local law enforcement agency, and provide as much information as possible. **The Sheriff's Office does not advocate watch members following, approaching, confronting, intervening with, or detaining suspicious persons, or otherwise putting themselves at risk.**
- If you observe or have information about a crime in progress, contact 911 immediately. No member should place himself or herself in a dangerous or life-threatening situation.
- Never confront a suspicious person, or attempt to make an arrest unless advised by law enforcement.
- If you are reporting an accident or a suspected crime, give adequate information to 911. Do not enter a potential crime scene, or touch or move anything at a potential crime scene unless a life is in danger or you are directed to do so by law enforcement.

- Get to a safe place before calling 911 or non-emergency.
- Specify the type of emergency and personnel needed (fire, police, ambulance).
- Specify the location using street names, addresses, landmarks, and mile posts if applicable.
- As a private citizen you are responsible for your actions. The Lane County Sheriff's Office does **not** provide any legal or personal injury protection for individuals who are performing Neighborhood Watch activities. You are responsible for your actions and are not certified or sanctioned by the Sheriff's Office during your crime prevention efforts.
- Do not enter a crime scene or disturb anything on the scene.
- Enter private property only when invited or with a signed release.
- The only liability or accident insurance coverage you have is what you provide for yourself.

Vehicle Patrol Tips

- If patrolling by vehicle, have two people in the vehicle so one can drive and the other can actively observe.
- Wear your seatbelt and obey all traffic laws.
- Do not "tail", follow, or chase suspicious persons as this can put you in danger.

Helpful Tips for Describing People or Vehicles when Calling 911 or Non-emergency

Describing Suspicious Persons

It's helpful for law enforcement if you can tell us why a person's activity is suspicious, for example, they are sitting on your neighbor's front porch and your neighbor isn't home. When calling the police, a good description is very helpful as well! Here are a few important details to actively observe so you can pass along the information to law enforcement.

- Male/female
- Race
- Approximate age
- Height and weight
- Hair (color, length, curly, straight, dirty, dreadlocks, braids, ponytail, shaved head)
- Clothing type and color (ex. Red, button down dress shirt and blue jeans)
- Beard/mustache or both (color, length, style, full, handlebar)
- Facial complexion (acne, blotchy)
- Predominant features (glasses-style, color, etc.)
- Tattoos/scars (description and location)
- If a weapon is seen, what size, type, color
- If close to the suspect what kind of body smells, cologne/perfume, voice accent.

Describing a Suspicious Vehicle

Details about vehicles can go a long way to help in later identifying that vehicle. Here are a few details to make note of if you can safely do so.

- Make
- Model
- Type (truck, sedan, coupe, convertible)
- Approximate year
- Plate number and state
- Color (keep in mind colors are hard to identify at night; light or dark may be a more reliable option)
- Note decals, bumper stickers, and antennas
- Note damage, hubcaps, and special wheels

Vacation Checks

Neighborhood Watch groups may check on each other's homes while they are away on vacation. Safety is of primary concern. Only provide vacation checks for neighbors you know unless you have written permission.

Vacation checks can include:

1. Driving by a neighbor's house to be a visual presence.
2. Checks that doors and windows are locked.
3. Walking the perimeter of the house to ensure illegal entry has not been made.

Important Phone Numbers

Lane County	Sheriff's Office Sheriff's Dispatch/ non-emergency Lane County Neighborhood Watch	541-682-4150 541-682-4141 541-682-4179
Crisis Assistance	24 Hour Hotline – Womenspace Child Abuse Sexual Assault Support Services Womenspace (Domestic Violence-Junction City)	800-281-2800 541-686-7557 541-485-6700 541-998-3799
General Information	Attorney General's Office Consumer Protection Dept. of Environmental Quality Victim Assistance Program	877-877-9392 (toll free) 800-452-4011 541-682-4523
Eugene	Eugene Police Department non-emergency	541-682-5111
Springfield	Springfield Police Department non-emergency	541-726-3714
Crime Prevention Team Home Inspection Requests	The Lane County Sheriff's Office Crime Prevention Team offers home inspections free of charge to help you decrease your chances of becoming a property crime victim.	541-682-4296

Additional Resources

(available online at www.lanesheriff.org)

[Starting a Neighborhood Watch Group](#)
[Organizing Your Neighborhood Watch Group](#)
[Neighborhood Watch Meetings](#)
[Neighborhood Watch and Social Media](#)
[National Neighborhood Watch Institute](#)
[National Crime Prevention Council](#)