OXNARD POLICE DEPARTMENT

Neighborhood Watch Participant Handbook



Jason Benites Chief of Police

"Protecting Our Community With Exceptional Service"

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About the Neighborhood Watch Program

The Neighborhood Watch program brings your neighborhood and the police department together to fight and prevent crime in your community. It is a voluntary, community-based organization that acts as a communication link between neighbors, neighborhoods, the community, and the police department.

Neighborhood Watch provides a way for your neighborhood to work together toward a common goal. It provides a forum for neighborhood organization and communication that is not influenced by race, socioeconomic differences, religion or other biases. It provides a means for you and your neighbors to come together to make your community a safe place to live and work, to get to know each other better, and to organize neighborhood activities. It provides a means for you and your neighbors to take a stand and commit that you will look out for each other.

Neighborhood Watch is a partnership between your neighborhood and the Oxnard Police Department. No one organization can prevent or solve all of the crimes that occur within our city. The police department is staffed with officers assigned to the various facets of the department, e.g., investigators or school resource officers, which makes it impossible to have an officer on every corner. It therefore becomes imperative that the police department and your neighborhood work together to report and solve crimes. As a Neighborhood Watch member, you serve as the extended eyes and ears of the police department, reporting suspicious activities when you see them. On the other hand, the police department provides the members of your Neighborhood Watch with crime prevention information, training, and resources for solving neighborhood problems.

Neighborhood Watch provides the means with which you can make a difference in your community by getting involved. You and your neighbors are the only people that have to live in your neighborhood. You are the ones most affected by what goes on there. It therefore stands to reason that you have the most responsibility in making your neighborhood a safe and secure environment to live in. By getting involved in Neighborhood Watch and working with your neighbors and the police, you may not make a difference in lowering the national crime rate or solving any pressing world problems, but you will make a difference in the world in which you live - your neighborhood - and in the lives of those you care about most – your family and neighbors.

This manual will provide you with the basics of how Neighborhood Watch works and what you can do to keep your family and your neighborhood safe. But remember, like any other guide, it can only show you what is possible. To make it work, you've got to do it.

Make Neighborhood Watch work in your neighborhood. Get involved.



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Neighborhood Watch Organization

Neighborhood Watch is a volunteer community organization that is comprised of Oxnard community members that are concerned about keeping their community safe. Your Neighborhood Watch area is organized as follows:

Neigh	borhood
Watch	Member

Block Captain

Oxnard Police Beat Coordinator

While the Oxnard Police Department acts as a resource and a partner in the Neighborhood Watch program, the program belongs to *you*. The ultimate success or failure of the program in reducing crime and bringing your neighborhood together depends solely on *you* and *your* involvement in your Neighborhood Watch area. Remember, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Get involved and make a difference in your neighborhood!

Your Block Captain oversees the Neighborhood Watch program on your block. Your Block Captain distributes information to each local member of your Neighborhood Watch group, collects and keeps up-to-date with members' information, plans meetings and coordinates with the Oxnard Police Beat Coordinator with running the program and keeping your Neighborhood Watch area active. Call your Block Captain for anything you need regarding Neighborhood Watch.

Working with your Neighborhood Watch Member, your Block Captain oversees the Neighborhood Watch program in your area. Your Block Captain organizes area meetings and activities, distributes timely information through Neighborhood Watch Members and using the phone tree or email listserve, keeps area maps and phone tree email listserve information up-to-date, and acts as liaison between your area and your Beat Coordinator.

The City of Oxnard has been subdivided into four Districts. Each District has two to three beats. Each beat has its dedicated Beat Coordinator. These Districts are used by the police department for allocating officers and keeping track of statistics. Your Beat Coordinator directs the Neighborhood Watch program in your particular Beat and acts as the liaison between the Neighborhood Watch program and the Police Department to make sure that your area's needs are being met.

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Participant's Guidelines

As a member of Neighborhood Watch, you have a responsibility to do the following:

- 1. Learn your neighbor's names, including all occupants of their residences. Be able to recognize them and their vehicles without any hesitation.
- 2. Attend all Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- 3. Properly identify all personal property using the included personal property record or a computer inventory program, engraving a number identifiable to you onto your property and/or by creating a videotape record of your valuables.
- 4. Keep doors and windows locked as well as garage doors down at all times, even when you are home.
- 5. Become a good witness by getting an accurate description of a suspect or a vehicle. Practice writing down descriptions from memory so when the time comes to actually report an incident, you will be prepared.
- 6. Keep an eye on your neighbor's homes and report any suspicious activities to the police. Write down your description so that nothing is forgotten. Do not delay your reporting or think that someone else will. A few minutes delay may reduce the chance that the criminal will ever be caught.
- 7. Teach children respect for the law. Involve them in crime prevention activities and make them feel a part of your Neighborhood Watch group. Teach them to be safe at home and away.
- 8. Remember that it is your responsibility to report crime and to be a good witness. Never take the law into your own hands or risk injury to yourself or others by trying to stop a crime in progress by yourself.
- 9. When you plan to leave for any length of time, arrange to have your mail and newspapers picked up or put on temporary hold. Leave timers on your lights and TV or radio. Make your home appear lived in whenever you are away. Contact your Beat Coordinator and request extra police patrols by your house while you are away.
- 10. *Get involved*! Look out for each other. Neighborhood Watch is your program and will only be as good as you and your neighbors make it. By being a good witness and an active participant in Neighborhood Watch, you will truly make a difference in your community.

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Crime Prevention Strategies

You've taken the first step by becoming a part of an organized Neighborhood Watch. The success of your Neighborhood Watch group will now depend on your involvement and continued support. Don't procrastinate getting involved. Here is a list of crime prevention strategies:

- Secure your home. Look around the outside of your home, paying close attention to windows and doors. Where would you break in if you were a criminal? Strengthen weak areas first. Make sure that doors and windows lock. Ensure that deadbolts and door locks are anchored deep enough, penetrating deep into the doorframe. Make certain that windows and sliding doors have wooden dowels placed into the tracks, especially those on the main level or basement. Train your family on how to remove the dowels and open the windows from the inside in case of fire.
- Turn on porch and yard lights and leave them on all night. Contrary to urban legend, this will not increase your electric bill dramatically when using regular wattage bulbs, but it will increase the security of your neighborhood dramatically. Criminals hate to be seen. Install motion detector lights to illuminate all possible points of entry into your home and to keep any cars, boats, sheds, etc. illuminated as well.
- Do not leave anything of value in your car. It only takes a few seconds for a criminal to burglarize your car. But most burglars are criminals of opportunity. If there is nothing to steal, the crook will move on. This applies to when you are parking at work or at a store. Take anything of value with you or, at the very least, secure any valuables in the trunk.
- Secure your garage. Remember to close your garage door anytime you are not in the garage. This means at night as well as when you are in the backyard doing yard work or just running to the store for a few minutes. A passing burglar can remove bicycles, skis, golf bags, power equipment, and other items in a flash. Do not leave these items lying on the lawn or unsecured outside at any time.
- Make certain that your house numbers are clearly visible. Police and emergency personnel will need to find your address quickly in the event of an emergency. Make house numbers visible on your house or mailbox. Numbers painted on the curb are difficult to see at night and during inclement weather.



On-line Crime Prevention: *Nextdoor.com*

Nextdoor.com is a *useful*, *private* and *proven* tool that is helping neighborhoods and entire communities be in touch and communicate about activity in our neighborhoods. To date, there are over 18,000 neighborhoods across the U.S. that rely on *Nextdoor.com*. Neighborhoods in the City of Oxnard are the latest to join!

Aside from connecting neighbors, *Nextdoor.com* has proven extremely *useful*, helping individuals keep up with everything in your neighborhood. It is a *private* environment designed specifically for you and your neighbors - meaning, outsiders, those outside the boundaries of your designated neighborhood cannot read or see your activity or communication.

When neighbors start talking, good things happen. As a result, you are able to build a stronger neighborhood, staying informed and are able to share useful local information. You also help keep the neighborhood safe by looking out for each other and being able to send messages and updates that help keep your neighborhood safe. Aside from helping keep neighbors connected and informed, *Nextdoor.com* also serves as a communication forum where you are able to share goods and recommendations.

At the end of the day, it is a private, independent on-line environment designed just for you and your neighbors. Each website is password-protected and not accessible by search engines. Only real neighbors are allowed and must verify and be verified by their address to join - so you know you can trust who you are sharing and communicating with. How are individuals verified? Visit *Nextdoor.com* to see and sign up today!





Oxnard Police Department on Facebook: Like our Page

Another on-line tool the Oxnard Police Department is using to communicate with community members is our growing Oxnard Police Department Facebook Page. To date, we have over 6,500 friends who are following and receiving our crime and community alerts, all issued news releases and crime prevention information.

The Oxnard Police Department is recognized as a Law Enforcement agency that embraces the value of social media. Looking at social media as a tool that can addvalue to our efforts to reach and engage a more dynamic and connected community.

The Police Department is continuing to increase our exposure to, and interaction with, the community by adopting a more interactive Facebook presence. Our Page is another avenue for interaction between community members and the police department. Police Department command staff members are required to create profiles and contribute posts, as well as respond to posts related to their assignment.

Like us, today.





Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is a theoretical approach that is based on human behavior. CPTED strategies, as defined by the National Crime Prevention Institute, are as follows:

- Natural surveillance;
- Territorial reinforcement;
- Natural access control; and
- Target hardening.

A brief explanation of the four strategies is as follows:

- Natural surveillance is a design concept directed primarily at keeping intruders easily observable. Promoted by features that maximize visibility of people, parking areas and building entrances: doors and windows that look out on to streets and parking areas; pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets; front porches; adequate nighttime lighting.
- Territorial reinforcement is a physical design that can create or extend a sphere of influence. Users then develop a sense of territorial control while potential offenders, perceiving this control, are discouraged. Promoted by features that define property lines and distinguish private spaces from public spaces using landscape plantings, pavement designs, gateway treatments and "CPTED" fences.
- 3. Natural access control is a design concept directed primarily at decreasing crime opportunity by denying access to crime targets and creating in offenders a perception of risk. Gained by designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances and neighborhood gateways to clearly indicate public routes and discouraging access to private areas with structural elements.
- 4. Target hardening is accomplished by features that prohibit entry or access: window locks, dead bolts for doors, interior door hinges.



Citizen Corps: Local Responsibility Against Terrorism

Shortly after September 11, 2001, President Bush addressed the nation. At that time he introduced an initiative called "Citizen Corps." Citizen Corps asks community citizens to embrace the personal responsibility to be prepared to get training in first aid and emergency skills; and to volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief, and community safety. Citizen Corps encourages every community to engage in preparing the homeland for any type of emergency threat. One of the programs the Citizen Corps encourages is Neighborhood Watch. They have urged that Neighborhood Watch expand its education to incorporate terrorism awareness and prevention and emergency preparedness.

Recognizing terrorist activity.

Although the US Government and Police Agencies are doing all that they can to prevent terrorist attacks, we need your help too. Citizens can take concrete steps in the community to help detect and deter suspected terrorists. By being aware of your surroundings and knowing how and when to report crime, you can make a difference in the war on terrorism.

Signs of terrorist activity may include:

- 1. Someone bragging or talking about plans to harm citizens in violent attacks or who claims membership in a terrorist organization.
- 2. Suspicious packages, luggage or mail that have been abandoned in a crowded place.
- 3. Suspicious letter or package that arrives in your mailbox.
- 4. Someone suspiciously exiting a secured, non-public area.
- 5. Any type of activity or circumstance that seems frightening or unusual within the normal routines of your neighborhood.
- 6. Someone unfamiliar loitering near a public building.
- 7. Someone using or threatening to use a gun or other weapon, place a bomb or release a poisonous substance into the air, water or food supply.
- 8. Strange odors, smoke, fire or an explosion.
- 9. Abandoned vehicles.

Preventing terrorist activity.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, a terrorist training manual, "Military Studies in the Jihad Against the Tyrants" was discovered. This manual contained written instruction on how trained terrorists should act while they await their orders to strike. One of the main points in this manual was to live in areas where neighbors do not know each other well. What we can learn from this is that to help prevent terrorist activity, Neighborhood Watch is a good place to start.

Neighborhood Watch and Neighborhood Councils provide a forum for neighborhood organization and communication that is not influenced by race, socioeconomic differences, religion, or other biases. It provides a means for you and your neighbors to come together to make your community a safe place to live and work, to get to know each other better and to organize neighborhood activities. It provides a means for you and your neighbors to take a stand and commit that you will look out for each other and if you do notice something suspicious, that you will contact the police department right away.

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Emergency Preparedness

A terrorism-related incident or natural disaster can happen quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. Knowing what to do is your best protection and your responsibility.

Create a disaster plan. Meet with your Neighborhood Watch group and your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team. Pick two places to meet in case you are separated; right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency or right outside the neighborhood in case you can't return home.

Ask an out-of-state friend to be your family contact. After a disaster it is often easier to call out of the affected area. Other family members should call this contact person and tell them where they are.

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least three days. Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit with items you may need in an evacuation. Store supplies in sturdy, easy to carry containers such as backpacks, duffle bags, or covered trash containers. Include:

- A three-day supply of water and non-perishable food.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person and one blanket per person.
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medication.
- Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash, or traveler's checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- An extra pair of glasses or contacts.
- Keep important family documents in a waterproof container.
- Make sure you have a kit for your pet, too!. It should include food, water, medicine, ID tag, leash, sanitation supplies and a picture of you and your pet.
- Plan now on whether or not you will be able to take your pet with you or not. Make arrangements for someone to watch your pet if you can't.

This is an uncertain world we live in. Most of us will face terrorist strikes, natural disasters or financial difficulties in our lifetime. Having a good Neighborhood Watch group and being prepared with food, fuel, water and material supplies can be a great comfort.

Furthermore, to help Oxnard citizens be prepared for such an occurrence, the Fire Department is offering Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.

For five weeks, one night a week from 6 P.M. to 9 P.M., students receive classroom and hands on training. The CERT instruction begins by teaching personal preparedness and how to organize a neighborhood team. Then lessons on fire prevention and suppression, and search and rescue techniques are given to citizens. Medical operations training includes triage procedures, bandaging, recognizing shock and how to maintain an open airway on the victims they will encounter. For further information contact the Oxnard Fire Department at (805) 385-7722.

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Reporting a Crime

If you know that a crime is occurring or suspect that something suspicious or dangerous is going on, if potential trouble exists, or if someone has been hurt, do the following:

Determine whether or not the situation is an emergency. An emergency requires an immediate response from the police department or fire/medical personnel. Immediately call 911.

If the situation is not an emergency, do not tie up the 9-1-1 telephone system. Call dispatch directly at (805) 385-7740. If you are in doubt, don't bother trying to figure it out. Just dial 9-1-1.

When you first dial 9-1-1 or dispatch directly, be prepared to give the operator your name, the address of occurrence and your phone number should the line be disconnected. Remember that the operator is using a computer, so even though they continue talking to you on the phone, help is being sent simultaneously. If you wish to remain anonymous, be sure to explain it to the operator.

What, when, where, and who are the most important items that you will need to relay to the operator.

What is happening?

Be as specific as possible. Try to answer the operator's questions as best you can. If you don't know the answer, tell the operator that you just do not know.

When did it happen?

Is this situation occurring now? Is something about to happen? How long ago did it occur?

Where is it happening?

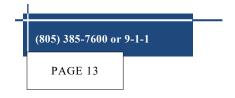
Give a specific address or directions.

Who is involved?

Give descriptions of the victims and the suspects as accurately as you can. Try to write down and remember as many details as you can.

Remember to be patient with the operator and try to answer all of the operator's questions as best you can, even if you do not understand the relevance of the question at the time.

As a member of Neighborhood Watch, *you are the eyes and ears of the police department in your community.* By making the effort to report criminal activity correctly, you are making your community a safer place.



How to Observe

Taking an active role in looking out for each other is the key to making Neighborhood Watch successful in your neighborhood.

You know your neighborhood - what is normal, what belongs and what doesn't, as well as what is suspicious. Realize that although you may know your neighborhood, being observant in your neighborhood takes practice and work. We are often times too occupied with getting somewhere quickly, talking on the cell phone, or taking care of the kids to be observant while driving or walking through our neighborhood. Make it a point to become more observant and more aware of what is going on in your own neighborhood.

Practice the pointers listed on this page and learn to always be observant.

Know who and what belongs at each house in your neighborhood. Know the hours that your neighbors work, if they have any children, as well as what cars they drive. Know what is regularly occurring in your neighborhood and easily become suspicious if something doesn't seem to fit.

Be prepared. Keep a good flashlight and even a pair of binoculars handy. Keep a notepad and pen close by for writing down notes, plate numbers, and suspect descriptions. Keep your car equipped with these items so you'll have them when you need them.

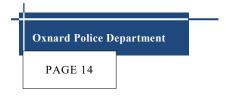
Become observant when out for a walk or a jog. Make a habit of carrying your cell phone with you. Practice memorizing your neighborhood's layout and be alert to anything that seems unusual or out of place. If someone is out in the yard, stop and get to know them. Keep a notepad and pen with you.

Keep an eye on the neighborhood when at home. Don't hibernate in your home, only noticing the outside world when leaving for work or the store. Take an occasional peek out the windows throughout the evening. If you get up during the night, take a moment to glance outside and make sure that all is well.

Trust your judgment. By practicing being more observant and by knowing what is normal for your neighborhood, you will know when something is suspicious or doesn't belong. When your instinct tells you that something is wrong, trust your instinct and do not hesitate to call police and report it immediately.

Become observant when you are driving through your neighborhood. Vary your route to work, the store or the kids' school each time you drive so you are always aware of any changes in your area. Practice memorizing license plates and identifying car makes and models.

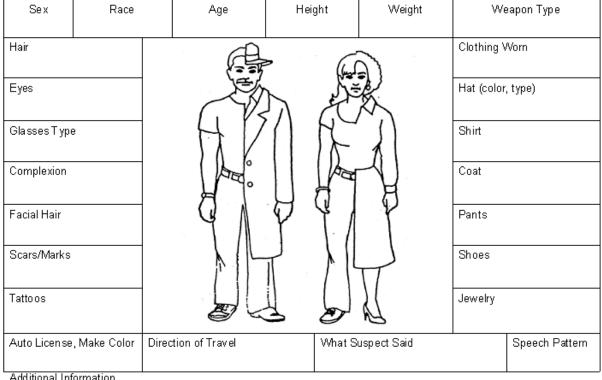
Observe crimes and suspicious circumstances as secretly as possible. If something suspicious is happening, do not make the person(s) aware that you are watching them. You are the eyes and ears of the neighborhood, so contact police and continue to observe and be a good witness.



Suspect Identification

As a Neighborhood Watch member, it is imperative that you become a good witness. Being able to provide police with an accurate description of a suspect is often times one of the most crucial things that a witness can do. A good suspect description will be invaluable information throughout any police investigation, helping police to capture the criminal initially to ultimately getting a conviction in court.

The most important features to identify are sex, race, height, weight, approximate age, hair color, eye color, clothing and any scars, marks or tattoos. Work from top to bottom, making mental notes of all of the following items when viewing a suspect. Write down this information as soon as you can after an incident.



Recording Suspicious Person Description

Additional Information

	(805) 385-7600 or	9-1-1	
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Vehicle Identification

Being able to provide police with an accurate vehicle description could make the difference between a crook getting away or being apprehended. A description like, "They're in a four door white car" just doesn't provide police with enough information to find the bad guys. Familiarize yourself with these descriptive characteristics and use them when identifying a suspect vehicle to police. Practice identifying cars when you are out and about. Most cars have the make and model printed somewhere near the trunk area. While you are driving to and from work, learn the different types and body styles of the cars you see so that you can be an expert witness when it counts.

Number of		
Occupants	State)
Make	Plate #	E
Model	Color	
Year	Other	

Make:

Chevy, Ford, Mercury, Dodge, GM, Plymouth, Saturn, Buick, Oldsmobile, Chrysler, Cadillac, Honda, Kia, Nissan, Toyota, Isuzu, Mazda, Acura, Infiniti, Lexus, BMW, Volkswagen, Volvo, Saab, Mercedes, Foreign or Domestic

Body Style:

- Car Two door or four door, sports car, hatchback, convertible
- Truck Small pickup, large pickup, flat bed, boxed cargo truck, extended or king cab, dual rear wheels, pulling a trailer, camper
- Motorcycle Bullet bike, street bike, off-road, small or large, domestic or foreign
- SUV Hard top or convertible, off-road, rear spare tire, two door or four door, top rack
- Van Panel van, Custom van, rear and side windows, company van (company logo or writing on side)

Other:

- Any identifying bumper stickers, dents, scratches, broken windows, etc.?
- Was it damaged in any way?
- Was it modified in any way?

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Phonetic Alphabet / License Plates

To avoid errors in verbal communication, police use the phonetic alphabet when saying individual letters. Most police departments in California and other states use the standard military phonetic alphabet listed below. While you do not need to memorize and use the phonetic alphabet as a Neighborhood Watch member, taking the time to memorize it and use it may help avoid confusion when giving a plate number to dispatch.

A - Adam	N - Nora	CALIFORNIA 55 CALIFORNIA 133
B - Boy	O - Ocean	XY7 391 AAA 000 14BC23/
C - Charles	P - Paul	VIT ONT WHY GOD TUDOFOA
D - David	Q - Queen	FAE 321 555.00 PL 409
E - Edward	R - Robert	WASHINGTON 1965 - OHIO 67 DHID
F - Frank	S - Sam	
G - George	T - Tom	AB-2345 KC-22-04 AB-0077
H - Henry	U - Union	GREAT LAKE
I - Ida	V - Victor	59 TENN 19 COTH ANNVERSARY 65 63 MASS
J - John	W - William	AB-1234 39-770 603 234
K - King	X - X-ray	ORIVE SAFELY. TEXAS
L - Lincoln	Y - Young	AB-1234 ARC-123 ARC - 123
M - Mary	Z - Zebra	NORTH CAROLINA 59 ADG IZJ

The safety of your neighborhood may depend on your ability to memorize the license plate of any suspicious vehicle and to write it down exactly as you observed it.

In fact, in many suspicious vehicle calls when no license plate is given to police, the perpetrator often gets away. On the other hand, in nearly all crimes where a correct license plate is given to police, the suspect is apprehended. A license plate number, correctly written down and passed on to police, is often the key to solving many crimes.

With the multitude of license plate designs used by the fifty states, as well as Canadian provinces and Mexican states, it is also vital that you note the state the plate is from.

If you are unable to tell what state it is from, at least remember the colors and overall design of the plate.

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Neighborhood Watch Integrity

Neighborhood Watch is an exclusive organization with high standards. When a criminal sees a Neighborhood Watch sign in a neighborhood, he or she should be assured that the people living in that area have made a commitment to look out for each other and keep their community safe. Individuals should know that neighbors have banded together and taken steps to ensure that crime will not prosper in their neighborhood. Those seeking bad should know to move onto another neighborhood.

What does a Neighborhood Watch sign mean in our neighborhood? It means that we are secure.

- 1. We have made personal inventories using the personal property record in this handbook or by other means.
- 2. We have engraved our valuables with a number identifiable to us.
- 3. Our home doors and windows are locked and secure and we have adequate outdoor lighting all night long.

It means that we are organized.

- 1. We are watching out for each other.
- 2. We communicate with each other using the phone tree and other means.
- 3. We hold meetings; organize block parties and other functions to bring the neighborhood together.

It means that we are trained.

- 1. We know what is suspicious and how to be a good witness.
- 2. We know what to report to police, how to report it and are not afraid to report suspicious activities.
- 3. We attend training meetings, when possible, and read training information whenever available.

It means that we are committed.

- 1. We will watch out for our neighbors.
- 2. We will be a witness and work with the police department to solve crimes.
- 3. We will work with each other in solving neighborhood problems.
- 4. We will support the Neighborhood Watch program, the program leaders and keep the program active.

IT MEANS THAT WE CARE ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY!



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Personal Property Record

Use this form to keep track of important information about your accounts and your valuables. In the event of a theft or loss, this information will be invaluable to both police and your insurance company. In addition to this form, use a computer program, videotape, and / or photo scrapbook to keep more detailed information and photographs of your valuables. Engrave a number identifiable to you on all of your valuable items. Keep this information in a safe place.

Bank Accounts

Bank/ Issuer	Account	Phone

Cars, Motorcycles, Bicycles

Make	Model	Color	License #	VIN / Serial #

Guns

Make	Caliber	Serial #

Electronics (TV, VCRs, DVD & CD Players, etc...)

Description	Serial #

Miscellaneous Valuables

(805) 385-7600 or	9-1-1
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Notes

