

# SANDY SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT

## **SANDY SPRINGS POLICE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH SYSTEM**

Neighborhood Watch, Block Watch, Town Watch, Crime Watch – whatever the name, it's one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime and reduce fear in your neighborhood. Neighborhood Watch Programs fight the isolation and separation that crime creates and feeds upon. It forges bonds among area residents and businesses, helps reduce burglaries and robberies, and improves relations between police and the communities they serve.

### **Neighborhood Watch Program**

Neighborhood Watch is the cornerstone of the Sandy Springs Police crime prevention strategy. It enlists the active participation of residents, in cooperation with law enforcement, to reduce crime in communities throughout the city.

The Neighborhood Watch program was pioneered in the early 1970's to educate community residents regarding their roles and responsibilities in the prevention of crime, and to encourage them to take active measures to prevent crime. The program calls upon residents to step forward and assist the police in organizing the community into a cohesive unit working toward the goal of building a safer, crime-free neighborhood. Neighborhood Watch groups discuss neighborhood crime problems with the objective of developing solutions to local problems. Sandy Springs Police Officers supply crime information to neighborhood watch organizations and instruct these groups in various crime prevention techniques. (See "timetable" paragraph below.)

### **Neighborhood Watch Coordinator**

The continuity and success of the Neighborhood Watch program hinges on the person referred to as the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator. The "Neighborhood Watch Coordinator" is a community member who acts as a liaison between those who work and/or live in a particular area, and the officers assigned to that area. The city is divided up into two districts. Each district has an assigned community officer. The community officer passes along crime prevention tips and other information to the neighborhood through the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator. This liaison is maintained on an informal basis within the framework of the Neighborhood Watch group.

### **The ABC's of Neighborhood Watch**

You can form a Watch group around any geographical unit: a block, apartment, park, business area, public housing complex, or business office. A few concerned residents, a community organization, or a law enforcement agency can spearhead the effort to organize a Neighborhood Watch. Any community resident can join — young or old, single or married, renter or homeowner.

Members learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and the neighborhood, and report activities that raise their suspicions to the police department. Watch groups are not vigilantes. They are extra eyes and ears for reporting crime and helping neighbors. Neighborhood Watch helps build pride and serves as a springboard for efforts that address community concerns such as recreation for youth, child care, and affordable housing.

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## **Getting Organized**

When a group decides to form a Neighborhood Watch, it:

- Contacts the police department or local crime prevention organization for help in training members in home security and reporting skills and for information on local crime patterns
- Selects a coordinator and block captains who are responsible for organizing meetings and relaying information to members
- Recruits members, keeps up-to-date on new residents and makes special efforts to involve the elderly, working parents, and young people
- Works with local government and law enforcement to put up Neighborhood Watch signs, usually after at least 50 percent of all households in a neighborhood are enrolled

## **What Neighborhood Watch Members Look For**

- Someone screaming or shouting for help
- Someone looking into windows and parked cars
- Unusual noises
- Property being taken out of houses where no one is at home or a business is closed
- Cars, vans, or trucks moving slowly with no apparent destination, or without lights
- Anyone being forced into a vehicle
- A stranger sitting in a car or stopping to talk to a child
- Abandoned cars.

Report these incidents to the police department. Talk about the problem with your neighbors.

## **How to Report**

- Give your name and address.
- Briefly describe the event - what happened, when, where, and who was involved.
- Describe the suspect: sex and race, age, height, weight, hair color, clothing, distinctive characteristics such as beard, mustache, scars, tattoos or accent.
- Describe the vehicle if one was involved: color, make, model, year, license plate, and special features such as stickers, dents, or decals.

## **Keeping your Neighborhood Watch Group Active**

It's an unfortunate fact that when a neighborhood crime crisis goes away, so does enthusiasm for Neighborhood Watch. Work to keep your Watch group a vital force for community well-being.

- Organize regular meetings that focus on current issues such as drug abuse, "hate" or bias-motivated violence, crime in schools, child care before and after school, recreational activities for young people, and victim services.
- Organize community patrols to walk around streets or apartment complexes and alert police to crime and suspicious activities and identify problems needing attention. People in cars with cellular phones or CB radios can patrol.
- Adopt a park or school playground. Pick up litter, repair broken equipment, paint over graffiti.

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- Work with local building code officials to require dead bolt locks, smoke alarms, and other safety devices in new and existing homes and commercial buildings.
- Publish a newsletter that gives prevention tips and local crime news, recognizes residents of all ages who have "made a difference," and highlights community events.
- Don't forget social events that give neighbors a chance to know each other - a block party, potluck dinner, volleyball or softball game, picnic.

### **Neighborhood Watch Program Timetable**

Neighborhood Watch is more than hanging a sign at the entrance of your community. Neighborhood Watch involves your commitment paired with our commitment to reduce and eliminate criminal activity based on the removal of the opportunity.

### **Risk vs. Opportunity**

Criminals use a formula called risk versus opportunity. They may not know it by name or what it means but they use it every time they commit a crime. It's the path of least resistance. Even amateurs will case or check out an area before committing the crime. This is the perfect opportunity for you to create some deterrent so he or she can make a decision to go somewhere else.

Fact: It isn't that likely that crime will go away. At some level there will always be someone who will take the opportunity to steal from someone else. The simple idea of risk versus opportunity is that homeowners have the opportunity to affect the decision the burglar or thief makes to select their home or go somewhere else. It's the path of least resistance.

This is the key to deterring a criminal from picking you. The problem is that when you actually deter a crime, you never know it. It's the things that you do over and over without seeing the result that will put you on the "high-risk" list.

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### **What do I do?**

The program requires at least 40% participation from the community residents. This is based on the ability to communicate with the residents including through e-mail. This area is driven by e-mail communication. We have the ability to post bulletins and weekly reports through e-mail and personal contact. We want to utilize the tools that are most effective.

The initial meeting will be to discuss the interest in the program and the expectations on the part of the neighborhood residents, board members, etc. At this meeting you will need to provide the following:

- Map of the subdivision, condo, or apartment community
- List of the streets
- Current e-mail contact list

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## **Crimereports.com**

Neighborhood crime activity can be monitored on [www.crimereports.com](http://www.crimereports.com). It is suggested that the Neighborhood Watch coordinator set up an email list to keep the neighborhood informed of any crime activity.

## **The Neighborhood Watch sign**

The City of Sandy Springs and the Sandy Springs Police Department's goal is to provide a quality program and service to the citizens of Sandy Springs. The NW program is included in this effort. We have been successful in providing quality and professional looking signs through the efforts of the individual residential communities. Each community purchases their neighborhood watch signs therefore allowing more supply through the program and to the residents. We ask each residential community to observe conditions for the signs. There are two options. One is that the community can place the sign on an existing metal sign post that holds a speed limit sign or an older Fulton County Neighborhood Watch sign. Option two is to have the sign post installed by public works.

Please make the check-out to: **"City of Sandy Springs."** and send the payment to, **Revenue Department, Sandy Springs City Hall, 7840 Roswell Rd, Bldg 500, Sandy Springs, GA 30350**. In the memo area of the payment, please put "Neighborhood Watch Signs" and which neighborhood watch program you are in. **Let me know when you send the check and send a copy of the payment to Sandy Springs Police, 7840 Roswell Rd, Suite 301, Sandy Springs, GA 30350, Attention: Community Affairs.** That way we can verify payment and have your sign(s) installed as quickly as possible.

## **Prices:**

NW signs        \$60

Sign post        \$60

## **Conditions**

We ask each Neighborhood Watch coordinator to ensure that the signs are installed under the following conditions:

Do not post a sign on any **yellow** sign such as 'Yield' or "No Outlet" or any other sign painted yellow.

Do not post a sign on any "**Stop**" sign or **street sign** or any other sign not owned by the City of Sandy Springs. This would include utility company signs or other privately owned signs.

Do not post a sign on **trees** or other landscaping.

You may post a NW sign on an existing speed limit sign or former Fulton County NW sign post or any neighborhood post that is the accepted architectural style for your community.

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### **Guidelines**

The idea is to provide a motorist or pedestrian with a full view of the sign as they enter your community. The most ideal location is 10-15 yards inside the entrance of your community. This puts it back from the street sign and allows someone entering the community to get a good look at it. We want it to stand out. It should not be displayed parallel to the street. It should face oncoming traffic.

### **Responsibility**

We ask that the coordinator and block captains review their sign locations and ensure they are displayed in a manner that best fits the above guidelines. Please clean the sign occasionally. The signs will eventually show mold and dirt after a period of time if not cleaned. Spray on cleaner and a paper towel will do the trick in a couple of seconds.

Thank you and we look forward to working with you.