

# The Champion Forest Neighborhood Watch Manual

Our Neighborhood Watch Program is  
effective because we work together and  
look out for each other

The National Sheriff's Association's Neighborhood Watch Manual has been modified to meet the  
needs of Champion Forest Residents.

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## **BACKGROUND - WHY WE HAVE IT**

The Neighborhood Watch program is one of the most effective means available for keeping crime out of our neighborhoods. It relies on the best crime fighting tool ever invented, **a good neighbor**. Fortunately, good neighbors are found everywhere.

Neighbors working together with law enforcement create the best crime fighting team around. Be a good neighbor and make your community safe from criminals by actively participating in our Neighborhood Watch program. Remember, the battle against crime will not be won by people acting on their own.

Neighborhood Watch is a community based organization of neighbors working cooperatively with law enforcement, and a vital tool in crime prevention in residential areas. The prevention of crime—particularly crime involving residential neighborhoods—is a responsibility that must be shared by private citizens and law enforcement. The Champion Forest NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH is based on this concept of cooperation when citizens take positive steps to secure their own property and neighbors learn how to report suspicious activity around their homes, crime such as residential burglary and related offenses decrease dramatically.

## **Neighbors Looking Out For Each Other!**

### **DESCRIPTION - WHAT IT IS**

**A Neighborhood Watch Program consists of actions residents can take both collectively and individually to improve the security of their families, homes and community.** The Precinct 4 Constables are in full cooperation with our neighborhood watch effort

**Neighborhood Watch Programs are most successful when there is participation by ALL residents.** Nationwide studies have shown when residents take positive steps to secure their homes and learn how to report suspicious activity, crime decreases dramatically.

**Our Neighborhood Watch program is based on three simple principles we encourage all the residents of Champion Forest to practice:**

1. **RAISE your alertness to possible criminal activity** in your neighborhood. Know what is going on outside your house and what is normal and what is not normal.
2. **LOWER your reluctance to calling the police.** Each of us naturally wants to be sure before we call the police. But let's allow the police to make the determination. Deter the culprit and prevent a crime rather than catch him afterwards.
3. **EXPAND interaction with your neighbors.** Get to know them well, their habits and their travel plans. This makes it easier to recognize and report suspicious activity.

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH ROLES

In the following pages we will discuss the way we have organized our Champion Forest Neighborhood Watch program, the actions of the coordinators, section leaders and specific steps each of us can take to enhance our and our neighbors' security. The above principles are woven through all of this material and are the bedrock principles we ask you to follow.

The Champion Forest Neighborhood Watch Program is based on the national model modified to fit our community. The national model describes three major roles and the responsibilities associated with those roles. They are Coordinators, Section Leaders and Residents.

## Coordinators

They will perform the following:

- Inform residents of measures that will make their homes & themselves safer.
- Select and meet with new section leaders.
- Act as liaison between residents, section leaders, law enforcement officers and civic groups.
- Obtain and distribute crime prevention information and materials.
- Send security alerts when appropriate.
- Maintain a list of section leaders and their contact information.
- Keep Neighborhood Watch manual up to date with corrections, improvements and new ideas.

## Section Leader

The Security Committee has designated Section Leaders from every residential section in Champion Forest. The responsibilities of the Section Leader include the following:

- Act as liaison between residents in their section and the Neighborhood Watch Coordinators.
- Discuss with neighbors possible crime problems, needs for assistance and suggestions for program improvement.

## Resident What Can You Do

The third but most important role is the residents. All of us who live in Champion Forest have a responsibility to ensure a safe and desirable community. Once you RAISE your alertness to the possibility of criminal activity in your neighborhood you can confront that possibility on two levels. First, you can implement security procedures in your own home, and second, you can join in creating a neighborhood level of security. Participation in Crime Watch does not require a lot of your time. It does require each person to adopt an observant and active attitude on a daily basis. As a result, neighbors will get to know each other better and will become more aware of strange cars, persons or circumstances that might require calling the

police. The more prepared individuals are, the more effective our program will be. The Neighborhood Watch Coordinators have developed a list of individual home security measures which you should consider for your own home. The following paragraphs, subtitled "Home Security" set forth the kinds of things, which many of your neighbors have done or are thinking about doing to improve security in their homes. The second level is to learn how to report suspicious activity around your neighborhood. This information is provided under the section titled, "Neighborhood Security."

## HOME SECURITY

You must be aware of the potential risk of crime in your home in order to prevent it. First, **remember that the key factor in most crimes is OPPORTUNITY.** If they can't get at it, they can't take it! **Everything that you can do to slow a criminal down will deter him** and hopefully convince him to try another, easier neighborhood. While determined intruders can enter almost any home, they usually seek the easiest target. You can take steps to make your house less vulnerable.

### Expanding Home Security

- Double Cylinder deadbolts require a key for both sides of the door. These locks are for doors with glass within 40" of the lock. An intruder cannot break the glass and unlock the door by reaching through. The key may be left in the lock when you are home and awake. When you leave your house or when you retire at night, the key should be stored near the lock but not within an arm's reach through a broken window
- Upgrade locks and ensure your home has the correct external door dead-bolt apparatus.
- Install an electronic security system.
- Use a timer or photoelectric cell that automatically turns a living room light on at dusk, particularly if you are going to be away at that time.
- Leave a radio on with the volume turned low when leaving home, even for short periods.
- Lock cars at night if left in driveway. Better yet, park your car in the garage. On occasion Champion Forest resident's personal items of value are stolen from cars left outside and unlocked.
- Always close and lock garage doors even when at home.
- Secure automatic garage door transmitter in glove compartment of your car.
- Install sliding glass door security bolts or bars.
- Secure all obvious (and not so obvious) points of entry to your home. Pretend you are the burglar. Stand outside your home and plan how you would get in, then install secure locks on all doors and windows.
- Lock up all ladders, ropes or tools that could help a burglar gain entry.
- Keep all shrubbery trimmed near your doors and windows. Don't provide concealment or climbing platforms for the burglar.
- Make sure that all external doors are installed with hinge pins inside. (some at doors have hinge pins on outside of door)

- Brightly illuminate all entrances, preferably with vandal-proof fixtures. Consider motion detectors in strategic locations with short duration automatic turn off.
- Keep your grass cut, leaves raked, etc., to indicate a well cared for and occupied home.
- Bring deliveries into your house promptly such as packages, parcels and dry cleaning.
- Empty your mailbox or arrange to have it emptied soon after mail is delivered.
- Remove flyers from doors, mailbox or driveway.
- Install new locks or re-key existing locks when moving into a previously owned home.
- Keep extra keys out of sight and in a safe place. Never hide a key outside. Most hiding places are obvious to burglars.
- Avoid displaying valuable items near windows with open drapes or shades.
- Never leave doors or windows unlocked when leaving home.
- Keep doors locked whether anyone is at home or not.
- Display only your street number on your mailbox.
- Start a "buddy system" with your neighbors in order to watch each other's homes.
- Watch for suspicious activity at a house where no one is at home.
- Do not leave repair crews unattended when possible.

## **Talk to your Neighbors**

In addition to steps you can take to improve the security of your individual residence, by EXPANDING your interaction with your neighbors you can improve the security of the whole Champion Forest community. Mostly, this involves knowing your neighbors and their habits so you can be alert to unusual activities. It also involves looking out for each other when neighbors are away, either for the day or longer. At such times, you should eliminate those signs which telegraph your neighbor's absence. And they can do the same for you.

## **Leaving Home for Several days**

- Suspend your paper or mail deliveries or ask your neighbor promptly pick them up *every day* and pick up packages that may have been delivered.
- Leave a key and travel destination information with a friend or neighbor; ask that the house be checked periodically.
- Have the drapes periodically opened and closed; and have different lights turned on and off so the house appears occupied.
- If garbage or recycling is to be left at curb, arrange for a neighbor to return the containers to the garage after pick up.
- Use "call forwarding" if available in your area. Call forwarding can give callers the impression that residents are home when they are actually away, by transferring your incoming calls to another telephone number. Your local phone company can provide you with further information.

## Daily Telephone Security

- Never give personal Information (name, age, address, etc.) to a stranger on the telephone. This is especially true when someone calls you! Give personal information when you make the call to someone and you know who you are talking to.
- Never let a stranger on the telephone know when you will or will not be home.
- Never let a stranger on the telephone know you are home alone. Instruct babysitters never to tell anyone who calls that they are home alone with children.
- Teach children, old enough to be left alone, never to tell a stranger who telephones that their parents are gone. Teach them to say, "My mom can't come to the phone now. May I take a message?"
- Do not give out a credit card or social security number to someone whom you do not know or whom *you* did not call.
- Exercise caution regarding personal information when using the internet and teach your children to do the same.

## Confrontations with Intruders

Develop the habit of surveying your home as you approach it. If you see evidence that someone has broken in, **DO NOT ENTER!** Call the police department. Should you confront a burglar, the very first rule is **GET OUT OF HIS WAY!** Never get between a burglar and the exit, and never try to stop him. **IT MAY COST YOU YOUR LIFE.**

If you are in your home and someone is prowling outside, make it appear that several people are at home. For example, call to someone, "**Dan, there's something outside.**" If it is dark, turn on the lights. Call our Precinct 4 Constable at **(281) 376-3472** (put this number on speed dial at your home and your cell); if you dial for assistance, even if you don't say a word or leave the phone off the hook, a police officer will come to your home to find out why you dialed the constable's number. **The police know where the call came from, even if your number is unlisted or you blocked the caller ID**

**A security system that requires no installation:** most cars come with 2 keyless devices. Keep the spare in the bedroom. If you think someone is trying to get into your house, press the panic alarm on your car key chain. It will go off from most anywhere inside your house. It works if you park in your driveway or garage.

If an intruder has already broken in, retreat and put other doors between the two of you (It is a good idea to have a deadbolt on an interior door.). If you cannot get out, try to signal a neighbor by throwing something through a window, just the noise may frighten a burglar away.

If someone should enter your bedroom while you are in bed, pretend that you are asleep as long as he does not come near you.

If the intruder is armed, do what he says, and see that children do so as well. Remain calm- intruders generally want your property rather than your life.

Memorize a description of the intruder and write it down immediately after he has left, then call the police. Don't depend on memory.

# NEIGHBORHOOD SECURITY

We have had many discussions with Precinct 4 officials, and they state over and over again that **the police would rather be called for a matter which turns out to be perfectly innocent than to allow a crime to take place.** LOWER the psychological barrier to calling the police. They will welcome your call. If you prefer not to be identified, they will honor your request, and you do not need to tell them your name. If you want to know the results of your call they will report back to you. If you are still unsure of yourself call your **Section Leader.**

## Recognize Suspicious Activity

**RAISE** your level of alertness to potential criminal activity. Anything that seems slightly “out of place” or is occurring at an unusual time of day could be criminal activity.

**DO NOT ATTEMPT TO APPREHEND A PERSON COMMITTING A CRIME OR INVESTIGATE A SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY. Call the police department immediately.** Do not worry about being embarrassed if your suspicions prove to be unfounded. **Law enforcement officers would rather investigate than be called when it is too late.**

The following Incidents **MAY** indicate possible criminal activity and should be reported.

- Open or broken doors and windows at unoccupied residence (burglary or vandalism).
- Unusual noises, such as gunshots, screaming, or dogs barking continuously (burglary, assault or rape).
- Sound of breaking glass (burglary or vandalism).
- A person exhibiting unusual mental or physical symptoms (person may be injured, under the influence of drugs, or otherwise needing medical attention).

Time and accuracy are critical in reporting crime or suspicious events. Call Precinct 4 at **(281) 376-3472** to report a crime in progress, suspicious activities or persons, and crimes that have already occurred. **Call 911** to report incidents needing Ambulance or Fire Department assistance. Your call could save a life, prevent an injury or stop a crime.

## Recognize Suspicious Persons

Obviously, not every stranger who comes into a neighborhood is a criminal. Legitimate door-to-door sales, delivery and repair people appear in residential areas frequently. Occasionally, however, criminals disguise themselves as these workers; therefore, it is important to be alert to the activities of all non-residents.

**Law enforcement officials *should* be called to investigate persons, in the following circumstances, who may be suspects in the crimes indicated:**

- Going door to door in a residential area, especially if one or more goes to the rear of the residence or loiters in front of a house. In Champion Forest door-to-door solicitation is lawful. But even though we may be sympathetic to the causes some solicitors represent,

we do not want these people wandering through our neighborhood. We should be inhospitable to them and do our best to discourage their presence.

- Forcing entrance or entering an unoccupied house.
- Running, especially if carrying something of value or carrying unwrapped property at an unusual hour.
- Heavy traffic to and from a residence, particularly if it occurs on a daily basis.
- Screaming.
- Loitering around or peering into parked cars.
- Loitering around the school or other areas where children play.
- Offering items for sale at a very low price.
- Loitering or driving through a neighborhood several times or appearing as a delivery person with a wrong address.
- Often children are particularly observant. **Pay attention to your children's comments about unusual events or persons.**

## Recognize Suspicious Vehicles

**Vehicles in the following situations MAY be involved in crimes and should be reported to authorities:**

- Slow-moving, without lights, following aimless course in any location, including residential streets and playgrounds.
- Parked, containing one or more persons, especially at an unusual hour.
- Parked by an unoccupied residence, being loaded with valuables.
- Abandoned in your neighborhood.
- Someone, especially a female or juvenile, being forced into a vehicle.
- Persons detaching mechanical parts or accessories from vehicle

## Describing and Reporting of Events, Vehicles and Persons

Practice the skill of providing quick, accurate descriptions. In attempting to describe events, vehicles, or persons, **write down the details of what you have observed while they are still fresh in your mind.** This way your descriptions to law enforcement officials will be as accurate as possible.

### What you should observe

- What is happening?
- When and where is it happening?
- What are they doing?
- Any physical characteristics such as height, weight, race, beard, or scars.
- Clothing description.
- How many people involved?
- Are there any weapons involved?
- Are the persons involved on foot or in a vehicle?

- Write down their Vehicle license plate number / state. Color, Make, Model, any visible damage.
- If you have a camera handy, such as a cell phone, take pictures.
- If they are leaving, which way did they go?

**Do not put yourself in harms way!**

**Remember, the police would rather be called to the site where there is a suspicious person and find him or her innocent than allow a crime to take place.**

## **SAFEHOUSES FOR CHILDREN**

A safe location should be pointed out to your children indicating which houses and people are willing to help a frightened or pursued child, if needed. Typically, these are places that your child is already familiar with and they feel comfortable going to if the need ever arises. They must also be advised not to abuse the use of these houses for uses such as going to the toilet. In an emergency, we hope that the residents of Champion Forest agree that the safety of the children in our community is a shared responsibility and will choose to offer assistance.

## **SUMMARY**

All of the matters set forth in these pages have been discussed with the homeowners, Neighborhood Watch Coordinators, and the Precinct 4 police officers. These are all sound and simple concepts that you can employ with only limited amounts of extra effort. If you and all of your neighbors employ these principles, we will have a safer neighborhood.

**Remember To:**

- **RAISE your level of alertness** to unusual and, therefore, potentially criminal activity.
- **LOWER your reluctance to calling the police** or, alternatively, your section leaders or the security coordinators.
- **EXPAND the way you interact with your neighbors** to create a neighborhood wide level of security.

**OUR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IS EFFECTIVE BECAUSE WE  
LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER**