



To organize and support community partnerships to prevent crime and the fear of crime

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[www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/cp)



# Neighborhood Watch

## A guide for crime prevention practitioners and volunteers

Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention Program  
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### This manual has the following purposes:

- To support the initial training of newly-forming Neighborhood Watches
- To help train new members joining an already-established Neighborhood Watch
- To assist Neighborhood Watch members to plan and implement projects to improve their neighborhood's safety and livability.



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El Programa de la Prevención del Crimen tiene un miembro que habla español. Llame por favor al número principal 503-823-4000 si usted necesita los servicios en español.

# Introduction to Neighborhood Watch

## ***What is Neighborhood Watch?***

Neighborhood Watch is a program designed to increase the safety and sense of community in neighborhoods by organizing and involving individuals and families in a united crime prevention effort. Neighborhood Watch participants learn how to:

- Communicate regularly with their neighbors using tools specific to Neighborhood Watch
- Recognize and report suspicious and criminal activity
- Increase home and vehicle security
- Increase personal safety of residents
- Make neighborhoods less attractive to criminals

When neighbors take the responsibility to build and maintain livable and cohesive neighborhoods, those neighborhoods are less vulnerable to crime. Under Neighborhood Watch, involved neighbors collaborate with the City's Crime Prevention Coordinators, police, neighborhood coalitions and associations, schools, parks personnel, area businesses, and others to create a united, secure, and peaceful community.

## ***Purpose of Neighborhood Watch***

Neighborhood Watch has several purposes:

- ***To help reduce crime and fear of crime in our neighborhoods.***

When an organized Neighborhood Watch exists in an area, it can serve as a deterrent to criminal activity, as well as give residents a sense of safety so they can better enjoy their homes and neighborhoods.

- ***To help ensure a prompt and effective response to neighborhood crime and livability problems.*** Trained Neighborhood Watch members are in a good position to notice problems within a neighborhood, such as burglaries, vandalism, abandoned vehicles, illegal dump sites, evidence of drug dealing or manufacturing, and street prostitution, and they know where to report these problems in order to get a quicker, more effective solution.

- ***To promote positive communication and relationships within a neighborhood.*** Neighborhood Watch provides an avenue for neighbors to get to know one another and build a sense of community.

- ***To empower neighbors to successfully complete projects*** to make their neighborhoods safer and more livable.

## ***Types of Neighborhood Watch***

A Neighborhood Watch is often formed when neighbors notice a problem in the neighborhood, such as a suspected drug house or a series of burglaries. Some Neighborhood Watches continue indefinitely, and some become somewhat dormant once the neighborhood problem is solved. The most effective Neighborhood Watches are those that are sustained over time, so that even when the problem at hand is solved, the group members are still motivated to continue because they know it can prevent future crimes, and they like the sense of community.



Maintaining your watch is discussed in the addenda of this manual.

The Neighborhood Watch program can be applied to a number of different environments, such as residential streets, apartment buildings, college campuses, parks, and business districts. Different environments may call for some differences in organization and operation due to the different crime and livability issues that may be present and the agencies that might respond to these problems.

- *Neighborhood Watch*: The umbrella term for the program, and also the term for the program when it is applied in a single-family housing setting.
- *Apartment Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch in multi-family housing.
- *Campus Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch on a college or corporate campus.
- *Park Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch consisting of neighbors of a park who are focused on preventing crime at the park.
- *Business Watch*: A Neighborhood Watch in a business district, consisting of businesses. While the principles of Business Watch are the same, the procedures are different enough that there is a separate Business Watch manual.

## ***Roles within a Neighborhood Watch***

Neighborhood Watches consist of a group of members, one or two of whom are designated as the Neighborhood Watch organizer(s). The organizer is someone selected by the group to maintain the paperwork of the group and be the primary communication link with partners of the watch.

## ***Roles of partners***

While community members are the people who form the actual Neighborhood Watch, they partner with others to achieve the best results. Without exception, Neighborhood Watches partner with and receive technical assistance from crime prevention staff and police. Depending on the location of the watch and the specific issues in that area, other partners may also be appropriate.

## **Crime Prevention Program Coordinators**

Employed by the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, Crime Prevention Program Coordinators (CPPC) are professional problem-solvers, educators, and community organizers on issues of crime and public safety. Every part of Portland has an assigned CPPC. In the context of Neighborhood Watch, CPPCs provide:

- The initial training to watch members, and often provide follow-up training as well;
- Advice and assistance to the watch such as information about resources and crime patterns;
- Coordination of responses to chronic problems. CPPCs send out crime alerts to watches when appropriate, and often act as liaisons between watches and police and other public safety and livability resources.



### **Police officers**

These could be district officers, who respond to radio calls; Neighborhood Response Team officers, who work on long-term problems; or members of specialty units such as the Gang Enforcement Team, the Drugs and Vice Division, or the School Police. Police receive, review, and respond as necessary to incidents reported by the Neighborhood Watch. They can assign an officer to attend watch trainings or meetings.

### **Foot Patrol Organizers**

These are community members who lead a Community Foot Patrol. A Foot Patrol is a trained group of volunteers organized to increase the safety and livability of their neighborhood. They walk their neighborhood streets, parks, or schools to deter crime and report incidents and problems. Often, people who are interested in Neighborhood Watch are interested in Foot Patrol, and vice versa. Many times, people are involved in both. Some Foot Patrols are outgrowths of a specific Neighborhood Watch. If a Foot Patrol exists in the watch area, for mutual safety and effectiveness the members of each group communicate with each other about any incidents or problems in the area.



### **Neighborhood coalitions and neighborhood associations**

Neighborhood coalitions are organizations which provide support and technical assistance to a group of neighborhood associations. It may be appropriate to notify the neighborhood association and/or neighborhood coalition of any problems that are detected by the watch. These organizations have a certain amount of clout because they represent the residents of an area, and can sometimes direct resources or attention to a problem.

### **Business owners and business associations**

These can be very effective partners for a Neighborhood Watch that borders on a business district or a Business Watch. Like the neighborhood associations and coalitions, business associations may be able to direct resources or attention to a problem. Some business owners are willing and able to make physical improvements on their building that may help deter crime, such as adding lighting.

### **Parks & Recreation staff**

A Park Watch would regularly communicate with the Portland Parks & Recreation security manager, the Park Rangers, the park district maintenance manager, and/or the staff at community centers, which are often located in parks. Depending on the location and the problem, once they are made aware of a problem any of these staff members may be able to take action that could help deter or eliminate problem activity in a park. Especially during the summer months, activity in parks picks up and requests for services and patrol by the parks bureau increases. The Parks Bureau employs Park Rangers who patrol the parks and assist in keeping the parks safe and livable. Park Rangers write park exclusions and work with the Police, neighbors, and other partners in keeping the parks safe and secure.

### **School staff**

When a Neighborhood Watch borders on a school, the group would communicate with that school's principal, the school district security



manager, and/or maintenance and custodial staff to help address problems that are detected on school grounds.

### **Other possible partners**

There are many other city staff and community members that might work with a Neighborhood Watch, such as the City's graffiti abatement coordinator or noise control officer, or the office of transportation, or a religious leader of a congregation in the watch area. Apartment Watches would partner with the apartment managers; Campus Watches would partner with campus security.

Neighborhood Watches are successful because they bring people together!

### **Success story**

Richard Glenn of Southeast Portland writes:

*On a recent Saturday afternoon, several neighbors simultaneously noticed a young man acting strangely: wandering in the street, staggering up people's front stairs, appearing to be under the influence of drugs. Because we each had a copy of our brand-spanking new telephone tree, we called the residents of each of the houses as the man wandered down the street, eventually attempting to break into one of the houses. The first person on the phone tree called the police, and the rest of us kept an eye on him until the police arrived. We pointed the man out to the police and he was apprehended on several charges.*

*Because of our Neighborhood Watch, which is less than 6 months old, we are much more aware of the goings-on in our neighborhood (which is mostly a good thing, except that we have realized just how much drug and other suspicious activity there is going on!). As a result, the activity seems to be dropping off... the criminals appear to be getting the message that we are watching and that illegal behavior will not be tolerated in this neighborhood.*

*It's a daily battle to try to keep ourselves, our homes and possessions safe, but it feels like we have regained control. We are all in agreement that the Neighborhood Watch is a big success. It has brought us together as a community and given us a sense of pride that wasn't there before the program got going. It has greatly improved the quality of life in our neighborhood.*



# Starting a Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watches begin with an initial meeting at which the Crime Prevention Program Coordinator (CPPC) provides the training and materials you need to get started. Below are the steps to take to set up this initial meeting.

## ***Initial Steps to Organizing***

### **1. Talk to your CPPC**

Contact the CPPC for your neighborhood to tell him or her that you are interested in starting a Neighborhood Watch. Ask any questions you have about how to proceed.

### **2. Ask a neighbor or two to help you**

If you already know some of your neighbors, recruit one or two of them to help you get your Neighborhood Watch up and running.

### **3. Find out about your neighbors' concerns**

Talk with your neighbors, asking them about their crime concerns and about any other block issues they may have. They might provide you with information about suspicious activity on your block at this time. Also ask them about days of the week that would work for them to attend a meeting.

### **4. Decide what area you are going to organize**

At the minimum, invite the neighbors who have a fairly direct view of each other's houses or apartments. For a standard city block this might include both sides of the street, corner houses that look down your block and backyard neighbors where applicable. It is a good idea to start with your own block, then recruit people on surrounding blocks to organize their own blocks. If you are organizing within an apartment complex, invite at least all of the people in your building, and decide if you want to invite the people in adjacent buildings as well.

Although full block participation is ideal, there are times when a household on the block is suspected of engaging in illegal activity. If the participation of that household makes others reluctant to participate, it is not necessary to include that household.

### **5. Decide the time, date, and location of the first meeting**

Usually Neighborhood Watch trainings are held on weekday evenings, and start around 6:30 - 7:00 p.m. Often meetings are held on your block in someone's living room. Choose a meeting space that comfortably accommodates the neighbors you have invited. The initial meeting takes about two hours.

### **6. Ask your CPPC to put the training date on his/her calendar**

Contact the CPPC two to three weeks in advance of your proposed meeting to ensure that he or she has this date and time available. Let him/her know the location of the meeting, the number of households expected and any concerns that your neighbors might have shared with you.



## **7. Deliver invitations to your neighbors**

Use written invitations to invite your neighbors. Distribute the invitations at least a week or two before the meeting. Try to make personal contact with every neighbor as well. This will increase the turnout to the meeting.

## **8. Recruit neighbors to help with the meeting**

They may volunteer to help with refreshments, bring extra folding chairs, escort elders to the meeting and assist you with contacting other neighbors and organizing the Neighborhood Watch.

## **9. Confirm and remind**

On the day of the meeting confirm the time and place with your CPPC. Have several block members help you remind the neighbors of the meeting to maximize turnout.

## ***Outline of the Neighborhood Watch training***

At your training, your CPPC will train your group in the following topics and give you the assistance and materials you need to start your group.

- Purpose of Neighborhood Watch
- Discussion of any crime issues of particular interest to group, possible group projects
- Organizing your Neighborhood Watch
- Roles within a Neighborhood Watch
- How to use the tools: block profile questionnaire, block profile form, block map, telephone tree, and tailor them to your specific needs
- Neighborhood Watch signs
- Recognizing and reporting suspicious activity
- 9-1-1 vs. non-emergency number
- Other resources for neighborhood problems
- Describing suspects and vehicles in a way that police can use the information
- Documenting suspicious and criminal activity
- How to improve the security of your home (inside and out) and the security of your vehicle
- Scenarios- how to deal with certain types of situations
- Maintaining your Neighborhood Watch in the long term
- Selection of watch organizer
- Q & A

## ***After the first meeting***

After the initial meeting, when the group has had their training and selected an organizer, there are a few tasks that need to be done by the Neighborhood Watch organizer and members to get the Neighborhood Watch officially up and running. Primarily, some form of communication network needs to be established, whether it's a phone tree, email list, or something else.

For your convenience, there is a task checklist in the addendum section of this manual.

## ***Follow up training and meetings***

An active Neighborhood Watch often has members join after the initial



training that happens when the watch forms. The Crime Prevention Program Coordinator (CPPC) will be happy to train new members of the Neighborhood Watch and do refresher trainings for people who are already members. Or, when a Neighborhood Watch is experienced and established, the Neighborhood Watch organizer may do these trainings. The CPPC can provide the Neighborhood Watch organizer with materials to conduct the training.

It's a good idea for active Neighborhood Watches to set up regular meetings for members to discuss what they are seeing in their neighborhood or next steps on a joint project. At a minimum, the group should meet annually. Many groups find it effective to meet more often. The CPPC or a police officer will be able to attend some of these meetings. Meetings are a good time to discuss how more members might be recruited, or any procedural decisions that need to be made. They are also a good time to have a short training on a topic of interest to members of your Neighborhood Watch that would help them better understand trends in crime and livability problems in their neighborhood. For example, additional training in homeless issues, gang activity, or domestic violence may be helpful. Talk to your CPPC about additional training you would like to have. He or she may be able to provide the training, or help you find a trainer on the topic. In addition to trainings, meetings are a great time to identify new projects to tackle.

This manual is available on the Office of Neighborhood Involvement website at [www.portlandonline.com/oni/cp](http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/cp). Follow the links for crime prevention.





# Neighborhood Watch tools and procedures

One of the most effective and valuable features of Neighborhood Watch is getting to know your neighbors. It is important for Neighborhood Watch participants to share information about the composition of their households and activities. When everyone becomes familiar with the normal activity on your block, it is easier for block members to recognize and respond to suspicious activities when they occur.

As you are compiling neighborhood information, discuss strengths and weaknesses of your block with your neighbors. Talk about visibility, areas of high daytime vacancy, who has dogs, routine activities, etc. The more information you share with each other, the better you are able to recognize when something suspicious is occurring. Sometimes burglars case out a neighborhood before committing a crime, paying attention to schedules, activities and alertness of neighbors. If a burglar strives to become familiar with patterns on your block, shouldn't you become familiar with them as well?



Here are the tools that you can use to share information with each other:

## **Block Profile Questionnaire**

*Where to find it:* In the addenda section of this manual.

*What it is:* The block profile questionnaire is used to collect the information for each household participating in the Neighborhood Watch. Although there are specific reasons for sharing each piece of information on the questionnaire, block members might not feel comfortable answering all of the questions on the form. This is voluntary. The form does not have to be filled out completely, but at the very minimum participants do need to share names, addresses and phone numbers.

*How to use it:* The form is distributed at the time of the initial Neighborhood Watch training. Members of the new Neighborhood Watch should fill out the questionnaire in a timely fashion and return them to the Neighborhood Watch organizer so that he or she can compile the block map, block profile form, telephone tree, or whatever form of communication has been selected by the group.

## **Block Map**

*Where to find it:* The Neighborhood Watch organizer creates it using information from the completed block profile questionnaires, then makes copies and distributes it to all watch members. A sample is shown in the addenda section of this manual.

*What it is:* The block map gives you a visual picture of your block. It's a handy way to remember addresses and names and it makes it easy to report any activity to a 9-1-1 operator, so that help can respond as quickly as possible.

*How to use it:* Keep it in an accessible, but hidden place in your home, preferably by the phone. If you should need to call 9-1-1, take it out and use it to help describe where a problem is happening while you talk to the 9-1-1 call taker.

## **Block Profile Form**

*Where to find it:* The Neighborhood Watch organizer creates it using information from the completed block profile questionnaires, then makes copies and distributes it to all watch members. A sample is shown in the addenda section of this manual.

*What it is:* The block profile form is a more detailed record of your block's composition. It includes information such as household members, work schedules, emergency phone numbers, email addresses, types of vehicles and special skills. It is usually in the form of a spreadsheet.

*How to use it:* Keep it with your block map in an accessible but hidden place in your home. Refer to it when you need the information. For example, if you hear a neighbor's alarm going off, you could check to see if they have any special instructions for their neighbors about what to do under those circumstances, such as call them at work.



## **Telephone Tree**

*Where to find it:* The Neighborhood Watch organizer creates it using information from the completed block profile questionnaires, then makes copies and distributes it to all watch members. A sample is shown in the addenda section of this manual, along with instructions on how to use the phone tree.

*What it is:* The telephone tree gives block members an effective method for sharing information between neighbors quickly. Each neighbor is responsible for initiating the telephone tree when any problems arise.

*How to use it:* Keep it in an accessible but hidden place in your home. Anytime there is news that should be shared with everyone right away, the telephone tree should be activated. For example, if you see someone breaking into cars on the street, your first call should be to 9-1-1, and then you should activate the telephone tree so that everyone on the street finds out about the problem and can look out their window to witness the situation and see if their own property is in jeopardy. The telephone tree can be used to spread good news, too, such as the birth of a new baby on the block.

## **Email list**

Email can be used very effectively to set up follow-up meetings and trainings, parties, and to have general discussions about issues or projects on your street. However, email shouldn't be used at times when information needs to be spread quickly, such as when a crime or suspicious activity is in progress on the street. When there is a time sensitive issue, phone calls are recommended, either using a telephone tree, or simply calling all members of the Watch.

Here is a more detailed explanation of the roles within a NW:

### ***Neighborhood Watch organizer roles***

- Coordinates the design, development and distribution of any paperwork related to the communication network
- Ensures that the information for the communication network is up to date, and that the CPPC has a current copy
- Relays information about crime and nuisance activity on the block to the appropriate resource (CPPC, police bureau, etc.)
- Acts as the primary contact person between the CPPC or the police and the block
- Coordinates collecting money for purchasing and installing the Neighborhood Watch signs
- Encourages full participation in the Neighborhood Watch Program
- Coordinates the welcoming of new households into the Neighborhood Watch
- Coordinates problem solving efforts, scheduling meetings and social gatherings
- Recruits block members to attend additional training opportunities
- Finds a replacement if no longer able to fulfill the duties of Neighborhood Watch organizer
- Performs the regular duties of a watch member as described below

### ***Neighborhood Watch member roles***

- Participates in the communication network: passing on messages as part of the telephone tree and informing neighbors of crimes and suspicious activity
- If a neighborhood problem is ongoing, may log details about suspicious or criminal activity to help police and crime prevention respond most effectively
- Attends Neighborhood Watch meetings and social gatherings if possible
- Works to develop trust and communication with neighbors
- Keeps an eye on neighbors' homes and reports suspicious activity and crimes in progress when they are happening
- Works with the CPPC, police and other resources to resolve neighborhood concerns
- Implements personal safety, home security and property identification strategies and works to make the block less attractive to criminals
- Works to find options and solutions to neighborhood issues and finds ways that members can be involved in the problem solving process
- May assist the organizer in putting together any paperwork related to the communication network
- May assist the organizer by helping with refreshments, hosting follow-up meetings and assisting with block parties



# Reporting suspicious activity

Suspicious activity can be defined as any person or behavior that causes alarm. Discuss with your neighbors any suspicious activities or individuals you have noticed on the block.



Below are some actual examples of neighbors taking action upon seeing what they considered to be suspicious activity.

- At 3:00 a.m. a woman saw a car pull up at an elderly neighbor's home. One man left the car and disappeared around the corner while a second man stayed behind the wheel with the lights off and the car's engine running. The woman called 9-1-1 and the police apprehended the first man breaking into a gas station on the next block.

- Early one Sunday morning a neighbor noticed a man walking down the street looking into each vehicle as he passed. A few seconds later the neighbor heard the sound of breaking glass. The neighbor called 9-1-1 and the man was apprehended a few blocks away with several stolen car stereos.

- A woman saw a young man knock on her neighbor's front door. When nobody answered the man went around the side of the house. The woman immediately called 9-1-1 and the man was caught burglarizing her neighbors' house.

## What to look for

Some suspicious activity may not be as obvious as the previous examples. Additionally, what is considered suspicious on one block may be normal activity on another. Keep in mind that what is not normal for your block could be an indication of a crime about to happen. Other examples of suspicious activity include:

<b>Concerning Vehicles</b>	<b>Possible Activity</b>
Slow moving vehicle without lights	Possibly casing neighborhood
Vehicle being loaded with valuables if parked by closed business or residence	Possible burglary in progress
Person detaching mechanical parts or accessories from vehicle	Possible theft or vandalism in progress
Locked vehicle that someone is attempting to forcibly enter	Possible theft of car or contents in progress
Someone being forced into vehicle	Possible kidnap, assault, attempted sexual assault, domestic violence

<b>Concerning Persons</b>	<b>Possible Activity</b>
Going door to door, especially if one or more persons goes to the rear of the house	Casing, possible burglary in progress



<b>Concerning Persons</b>	<b>Possible Activity</b>
Loitering in front of house or business, especially if site is unoccupied	Possible burglary
Person running carrying items of value, i.e. TV, stereo	Possible suspect fleeing scene of theft
Sounds of a fight- screaming or yelling, sounds of breaking furniture or glass	Possible domestic violence assault, sexual assault
Persons offering items for sale at a very low price	Possibly trying to sell stolen items
Persons coming to your door with unusual requests, such as money for gas or a locksmith, or donations for a charity but the person carries no official looking materials	Possibly casing house or attempting an entry for robbery

If your intuition tells you something isn't right, call 9-1-1 or the non-emergency number and report your suspicions. It's better to discover that nothing is wrong than to let a crime occur.

If there is an ongoing problem with crime at a location, your CPPC will give you forms to help you log the information. Logging helps establish patterns in the activity which makes effective response easier, and can help police get search warrants for locations with serious problems.

### ***Describing suspect, vehicles, and activities***

When you call the police or make entries into a log, how you describe what you have seen is very important. Your information will allow any responding officer(s) to know specifically what they are looking for and where to look for it.



#### **Describing suspects**

Take note of gender, race, age, height, weight, hair, complexion, scars, tattoos, glasses, facial hair, clothing, and anything else that would help police find the person. If you don't have time to note all of these, pay the most attention to things the suspect cannot change. They can quickly change out of their clothing, but they can't quickly remove a tattoo or scar, or change their weight.

#### **Describing vehicles**

The license plate is the most important piece of information. Take note of the license plate and the direction in which the vehicle was travelling. Then note color, make, year, body style, and any other identifying characteristics such as dents or bumperstickers.

#### **Describing activities**

Give as much detail as you possibly can. For example:

*"I saw a person take a small orange colored object out of their mouth and hand it to another person. The second person handed the first person money. The first person folded the money in half and put the money in the right front pocket of their pants. The second person put the orange packet in the left front pocket of their jacket,"* is much more useful than: *"I saw a person dealing drugs."*

### **Accurate Terminology**

When calling 9-1-1 it is important to be as clear and accurate as possible about what you are observing. In order to be effective you should have working knowledge of the terminology used by the police and the 9-1-1 call takers to prioritize crime. To say "I've been robbed!" when in fact you were the victim of a burglary may have an effect on how the police respond. Below is a list of commonly used terms to describe criminal activity:

<b><i>Crime</i></b>	<b><i>Definition</i></b>
Assault	Causing injury or attempting to cause injury to another person
Burglary	Unlawful entry of a structure with intent to commit a felony or any theft. (Note: a residential burglary is theft from a dwelling. Non-residential burglary is theft from a business, a detached garage or any other non-dwelling.)
Car Prowl	Theft from an automobile, not the theft of an automobile
Larceny	Theft of property other than by burglary or robbery (pickpocketing, shoplifting, etc.)
Robbery	Taking or carrying away of another's property forcefully or with imminent threat of force with intent of permanently depriving rightful owner of the property (e.g.. a stick-up, mugging)
Sexual Assault	Forced or nonconsensual sexual activity by one against another (not limited to rape or to women)
Vandalism	Destruction or defacing of property

### ***Calling 911, non-emergency, and other resources***

(This section adapted from Bureau of Emergency Communications brochure)



#### **When to call 911**

Call 911 when it is an emergency and a prompt response is needed. Call 911 if it is a life-threatening situation or something is occurring at the time of the call. A fire, medical problem, assault, fight, traffic accident, or any situation that could result in loss of life or major property loss should be called in to 911.

#### **What happens when you call 911**

When you call 911, a call taker will ask you a series of questions which they are trained to ask. Keep your answers as short and direct as possible. Questions may include: What happened? What is the location? Where are you calling from? What is your name?

Please do not assume that the call taker has this information in the computer. All facts need to be verified to ensure that your emergency is handled as quickly as possible.

#### **Why you should stay on the line**

While you are on the phone with the call taker, he or she can send your call to the dispatcher. Staying on the line with the call taker does not in-

terfere with the ability of the dispatcher to send help and it will not delay the response. The call taker may need you to stay on the line to help direct emergency personnel to the right location or to provide additional assistance that can help ensure your emergency is handled correctly. If it is possible, do not hang up the phone until the 911 call taker says it is okay to hang up.

What should you do if you're put on hold?

If you call 911 and reach a recording which states that all lines are busy, stay on the line. Your call will be answered as quickly as possible. If you hang up and redial, you will lose your place in line and a call taker will receive the message that someone from your phone called 911 and then hung up. The call taker then is required to attempt to call you back; meanwhile if you are calling in to 911 again, two call takers are now attempting to respond to your call.

When to call the non-emergency number

The non-emergency number is 503-823-3333, which you can dial 24 hours a day for non-emergency police help. Using the non-emergency number keeps 911 available for true emergencies. 911 call takers receive non-emergency calls often; most frequently the call is from someone wanting to report a crime which occurred a few hours, or even a few days ago. This ties up valuable resources that should be reserved for true emergencies.

Some examples of when you should call 503-823-3333 are:

- When you are taking out your garbage, in the bushes you find a wallet or a pile of mail that appears to be stolen
- When you look out your front window, you see some people out on the street who are behaving suspiciously and you would like to have the police check them out, but no obvious crimes are being committed and no one is in danger
- You return home after work and find that someone has stolen your lawnmower out of your shed at some point during the day.

When not to call either number

Often people call 911 or the non-emergency number if they want to know road conditions, report an animal problem which does not involve a vicious animal, report a power outage, or are having trouble finding a phone number in the phone book. When you need information, or if you are making routine business inquiries, you should not use either the emergency or non-emergency number.

If you cannot find a phone number in the phone book, call information at 411.

If you have a complaint or question regarding a service provided by the City of Portland or Multnomah County, call the city/county information and referral line at 503-823-4000.

For other frequently called numbers, see the addendum of this manual.



# Addenda

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***Do we have to include everyone on the street in our Neighborhood Watch? What percentage needs to be involved?***

The strongest Neighborhood Watches include the majority of the people who live on that block or apartment floor, but there is no specific percentage that is required to form the watch. You may have neighbors who do not want to participate because they are very private, and that is their choice. Also, there may be a house on the street where the residents are committing crimes and it's the reason the watch is forming in the first place. There is no obligation to include this house!

### ***Can minors participate in Neighborhood Watch?***

Any member of a participating household is considered part of the Neighborhood Watch. However, some activities of the watch are only appropriate for adults or older, responsible teens. For example, if a telephone tree is activated, a child should not be burdened with being a link in the phone tree. During an activation of the phone tree, if you reach a child or babysitter, and no adult member of the watch is home, leave a message and call the next person on the phone tree yourself.

### ***How large of an area should we organize? Does everyone have to live on the same street?***



A major function of Neighborhood Watch is for neighbors to keep an eye on each others' homes and watch for suspicious or criminal activity. Therefore, you don't want your watch to be any bigger than would allow the neighbors to see each others' houses. A typical city block is about the right size for a watch.

Everyone does not have to live on the same street, as long as they can still see each others' homes well.

If you want to see a larger area organized into Neighborhood Watch, form your own watch, then recruit people from neighboring streets to start their own. In some parts of Portland, there are 5 or 6 adjacent blocks or multiple apartment buildings within the same complex organized into separate Neighborhood Watches, and the organizers of these watches

set up a communication system between them.

### ***How do we encourage new neighbors to join?***

Whenever a new family moves into your watch area, they should be greeted and welcomed. Tell them you have a Neighborhood Watch in your area and who the organizer is. This might be an ideal time to schedule a social event combined with a meeting to welcome the new residents. Give them a copy of this manual, or direct them to the ONI website at [www.portlandonline.com/oni/cp](http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/cp) for a copy. Sometimes people are uncomfortable about joining a Neighborhood Watch because they don't understand what it's about, and once they understand it better, they are enthusiastic.

### ***Where can I get Neighborhood Watch signs for my street? Who installs our signs? Can we put the Neighborhood Watch signs on utility poles? Do you need a list of where the signs are posted?***



You can get Neighborhood Watch signs from your CPPC. The Crime Prevention Program gets the signs made and sells them at cost to active Neighborhood Watches. At the time of this writing, the signs cost \$20 each. Most Neighborhood Watches choose to put up 2-3 signs, and everyone pitches in a few dollars to cover the cost.

Members of the group install the signs. The signs are drilled to accept bolts, but do not come with the bolts themselves.

As you travel around the city, you will see that most Neighborhood Watch signs are on telephone poles. In 2002, the utility companies began requesting that signs not be mounted on telephone poles because they present a safety hazard to utility workers who must climb the poles or be lifted past them in a cherry picker to service the lines. Anytime the utilities need to service a pole that has a sign, they remove the sign and deliver it back to the Crime Prevention Program, with a note affixed to it indicating where it had been mounted. We recommend that you do not mount your signs on utility poles so that they do not get removed. Alternate locations include metal or wood fenceposts on private property. You do not need to notify your CPPC about where you decided to mount your sign.



***How often should our contact list be updated?***

Once per year or every time there is a change in residents in the watch area, whichever comes first.

***Who ultimately controls or “owns” our Neighborhood Watch?***

The “ownership” lies with the group itself. Neighborhood Watch members are volunteering for their community.

The City’s Crime Prevention Program is responsible for providing training, advice, and technical assistance to the group, and helping the group get connected with police and other city services. In exchange, the Crime Prevention Program asks for the following from the group:

- That members of the watch abide by the basic rules of Neighborhood Watch, as described verbally in the training and on the training sign-in sheet. Most importantly, they agree that they will never misuse the personal information that they receive about their neighbors through Neighborhood Watch to harm those neighbors in any way, and that they will not share that information with anyone other than the Watch members, Crime Prevention staff, and emergency personnel.

***How often do we meet? Will the CPPC or an officer attend all of our meetings?***

Your Neighborhood Watch should hold a meeting at least once per year, preferably more often.

With over 600 Neighborhood Watches in the city, it would be impossible for your CPPC or neighborhood officer to attend all of your meetings, especially if you have them frequently. Think about which meetings would benefit most from having the CPPC or officer attend, and invite them to those. They will make every effort to be there. Their schedules fill up quickly, so give them as much notice as you can. If it is imperative that they be at the meeting, before you set the date, call to make sure they have it available.

### ***What training is available to our Neighborhood Watch?***

Your CPPC can teach a number of topics relevant for Neighborhood Watches, or help you find a speaker. Additionally, the Crime Prevention Program sets up numerous trainings throughout the year which are free and open to the public. If your CPPC has your email address, he or she will send you notices of these trainings.

### ***Do we have to attend our neighborhood association meetings?***

It is not required, but is a very good idea. Your neighborhood association can bring attention and possibly resources to ongoing crime or livability problems in your area.

### ***How can we keep our watch motivated when there is not much crime to report? How can I keep my neighbors interested in Neighborhood Watch after we get address the major problem on the street?***

See the sections of this addenda titled, "Maintaining your Neighborhood Watch: keeping it alive and thriving and taking it to the next level," and "Motivating members: the Neighborhood Watch organizer as volunteer coordinator."

### ***What if a member of our Neighborhood Watch seems to be involved in family violence?***

Many people who witness a disturbance between romantic partners or family members feel like the situation is "private" and should be ignored. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you see violence, or a situation that is about to become violent, no matter the relationship between the people involved, 911 should be called. While the people involved in family violence may feel embarrassed if attention is called to their situation, violence should never be ignored. Ignoring violence hurts the whole community. See the section of this addenda titled, "The role of Neighborhood Watch in responding to violence, neglect, and abuse."

## ***Home & Vehicle Security***

### **Prevention of burglary, auto theft, and car prowl**

As discussed in your initial Neighborhood Watch training, by taking some relatively simple precautions with your home and your vehicle, you can greatly decrease the chances that you will be targeted for a burglary, auto theft, or a car prowl.

The Portland Police Bureau has an excellent booklet about protecting your home and your vehicle. It discusses doors, windows, locks, lights, landscaping, engraving your valuables, alarms, precautions to take while you are on vacation, and keeping your vehicle safe from thieves. Go to [www.portlandonline.com/police](http://www.portlandonline.com/police) and either click on the Publications tab, or do a search for "A Guide to Home and Vehicle Security."

### **Recovering your stolen property**

The Portland Police have rooms full of recovered stolen property which cannot be returned to its rightful owners because there is no way of identifying to whom it belongs. If you are ever burglarized, you are much more likely to have your valuables returned to you if they are properly identified as yours. The Portland Police Bureau has a brochure on how to engrave and document your property. Go to [www.portlandonline.com](http://www.portlandonline.com).



com/police and follow the links for Publications.

## ***The role of Neighborhood Watch in responding to violence, neglect, and abuse***

While Neighborhood Watches are usually focused on eliminating property crime and livability problems, they have an important role to play in responding to problems such as child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, and domestic violence. These widespread problems are not comfortable to discuss, but it is important to do so nevertheless.

Family violence is a heavy burden on society as a whole. Disturbances at violent households constitute a large percentage of police calls for service and are some of the most dangerous situations that police respond to. Children who grow up witnessing violence at home are at higher risk for all kinds of problems, such as physical and emotional health problems, learning problems, drug and alcohol abuse, and criminal behavior. Workers experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional violence at home are significantly less productive and take many more sick days. Even if you yourself are not being abused or neglected, these problems affect you as a neighbor, friend, parent, co-worker or supervisor, and taxpayer.

If you think someone is being victimized or neglected on an ongoing basis in a home within your watch, call your CPPC to discuss the situation. He or she can help you form a response plan.

***If the person being abused or neglected is a child or an elderly or disabled person***, call the police or an abuse hotline to report the problem.

Multnomah County Child Abuse Hotline ..... 503-731-3100  
Multnomah County Aging & Disability Services ..... 503-988-3646

***If the abused person is an adult who is not frail or disabled***, they need all the help they can get, free from judgment about what they should or should not be doing to fix the problem themselves. Consider having someone approach the abused person at a time when they are alone and there is time to talk. Ideally, this helper would be the person on the street who knows the abused person best or who is good at setting other people at ease. It is very common for people who are being abused to feel ashamed, and the helper should do whatever they can to be supportive, and at the same time not tell the abused person what they should or should not do. The best way to help is to be a good listener and to offer options, letting the abused person choose the course of action. Here are some of the options that have been used by Neighborhood Watches to help an abused neighbor:

- The neighbors could be given a code word that means “I can’t talk and I am in severe danger.” If the abused person calls and says the code word, the neighbor will know to call 9-1-1.
- If the violent person has moved out of the house and there is a restraining order against him or her, a picture of that person could be distributed to the neighbors, along with a description and license plate number of their car, so that if they show up on the street, the police can be called and the abuse survivor warned.

There are numerous agencies in Portland with expertise in helping





victims of domestic violence. Below is the number for a 24 hour hotline which can make referrals to these agencies, as well as an excellent website with extensive information about domestic violence as a phenomenon and listings of local resources.

Portland Women's Crisis Line ..... 503-235-5333  
[www.co.multnomah.or.us/dchs/dv/dvman\\_index.shtml](http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/dchs/dv/dvman_index.shtml)

### ***Maintaining your Neighborhood Watch: Keeping it alive and thriving & taking it to the next level***



Typically, Neighborhood Watches form in response to a specific neighborhood problem, such as a sharp increase in burglaries. Once the crisis is resolved, some Neighborhood Watches become inactive because members may not see the group as relevant any longer. Studies show that active Neighborhood Watches reduce the fear of crime, encourage crime reporting, stimulate members' involvement in crime prevention, inhibit drug trafficking and encourage beautification activities. Unfortunately, once a Neighborhood Watch becomes inactive, many of the benefits are lost. However, when watches succeed in remaining active, they are much more likely to prevent future crimes from happening or to respond effectively if they do. They also make neighborhoods great places to live.

Part of keeping your Neighborhood Watch alive and thriving is to make it relevant and enjoyable for the members, striking a balance between business and pleasure. Here are some suggestions for activities and projects you can use to keep your group cohesive and take it to the next level:

- Hold regular meetings to help residents get to know each other better and to collectively decide upon strategies and activities
- Invite a guest speaker to your next watch meeting, e.g. have your CPPC or Neighborhood Response Team officer come to the meeting to talk about crime rates in the neighborhood
- Conduct a community needs survey- find out what concerns people have about life in the neighborhood
- Have a work party to help neighbors in securing their homes, e.g. help elders or other neighbors who might need assistance with trimming shrubbery or installing lighting
- Have a block party- National Night Out is always the first Tuesday in August, and is a great time to do this
- Order a shared drop box for the block and have a clean up day
- Arrange a group field trip to the 9-1-1 center
- Write and distribute occasional Neighborhood Watch newsletters
- Borrow an engraver from the library and have an engraving party
- Hold a graffiti removal day
- Have a game night- gather together to play cards, board games, or badminton
- Start a book club
- Adopt a nearby park or playground and keep it free of litter
- Hold a block garage sale
- Get rid of an abandoned car
- Ask the local convenience store to stop selling drug paraphernalia



- such as mini rose vases
- When gardens are overflowing in August, have a vegetable exchange party
- Organize a kid's costume parade
- Have an ice cream social- everyone brings a different flavor
- Form a Neighborhood Emergency Team to respond to natural disasters- do a search on [www.portlandonline.com](http://www.portlandonline.com) for "NET" for more details
- Ask your CPPC for a "Know Your Neighborhood" training-- a training and workbook about basic emergency preparedness
- Invite everyone over for a potluck dinner, or have a "progressive party," moving from house to house for each course of a meal
- Start an exercise or walking group
- Establish a telephone reassurance system whereby elders or shut-ins are telephoned regularly to make sure everything is all right
- Create a Community Foot Patrol in your park or around your neighborhood- ask your CPPC for details
- Invite the Red Cross to give the neighbors a training on CPR and First Aid
- Welcome new neighbors when they move in with homebaked goods, a map of the area, references for neighborhood businesses, and/or a welcome party

### ***Motivating Members: The Neighborhood Watch organizer as volunteer coordinator***

The fun and success of Neighborhood Watch lies in sharing the work. How can the Neighborhood Watch organizer motivate neighbors to help with the watch, beyond just participating in the telephone tree when something happens? It might help to view this position as a volunteer coordinator. If you are successful in getting your block members active and involved, you can organize all kinds of wonderful things for your watch, such as a block garage sale, a kids parade, a group that welcomes new residents, or a field trip to the 9-1-1 center. Some fundamentals of getting people to volunteer:

#### ***1. Don't be afraid to ask.***

- One of the best ways to get someone to volunteer is to directly ask them. 80% of people who do not volunteer indicate that it is because nobody ever asked. When people are asked to volunteer, they feel flattered and needed.
- You can always ask a whole group of people if they want to participate ("Is anyone willing to be in charge of making flyers?"), but you are more likely to get volunteers if you ask individual people ("Sue, would you be willing to make flyers?")

#### ***2. Tailor your request to the person.***

- Before you ask for volunteers, make a list the jobs that need to get done, and the skills that are needed to do those jobs. Then try to match people with a job they will enjoy. People will procrastinate if they don't enjoy their task.
- When new folks move onto the block, don't immediately approach them to do a task. Get to know them first. Make them feel welcome and let them bond a little with the neighborhood before you ask them to contribute. Make sure they understand

the concept of Neighborhood Watch. The more they understand what the effort is all about, the better they can contribute.

- What is the person's personality? Is the person an introvert or an extravert? Introverted people might enjoy work that happens behind-the-scenes, such as computer work, walking around distributing newsletters, or setting up tables and barricades for a block party. Extraverts might enjoy going door-to-door to solicit contributions for the Neighborhood Watch signs or making a speech at an awards party.
- Does the person have special skills or hobbies that they might contribute? Someone who is mechanically inclined might help an elderly resident install locks on their windows. Someone with computer skills might set up a watch list serve. Someone who loves to bake might contribute cookies for a Neighborhood Watch meeting. Someone who is artistic might teach a painting class for the kids while their parents meet to talk about an issue on the block.
- People are motivated to volunteer for different reasons. Be flexible; don't assume the same thing motivates everyone. Some people like the camaraderie of working on a project together, while others are focused on the result of the project. Try to determine what motivates someone and give them opportunities to experience that.

### 3. Accept "no" for an answer.

- Don't make someone feel guilty if they don't want to do what you are asking. If the potential volunteer feels OK about saying "no," they are left feeling positive about you and the Neighborhood Watch effort. It could result in a "yes" next time.

### 4. Keep your expectations reasonable.

- Don't try to rope someone into a huge amount of work, or pretend that a job will take two hours if you know it will take eight hours. Be honest and clear about the amount of time and energy required for the job.
- If someone agrees to do something once, don't assume they will always do it. If someone feels trapped into a job, they burn out quickly. Ask if they'd like to give it a try this once. Afterwards, if they seemed to enjoy it, ask them if they'd like to do it again next time.
  - If you want the person to volunteer again in the future, try to make sure that the benefits for the person outweigh the costs of participation. Part of this is thanking them for their help.

### 5. Give them recognition for their good work.

- Be generous with thanks. Recognition should not just happen once per year. It should happen often, in formal and informal ways. This can be done in such a way as to cost little or no money. Some ideas:
  - a. Say thank you face-to-face or send a thank you note
  - b. Give the person some flowers or vegetables from your garden or some home made cookies
  - c. Mention the person's good work in a watch newsletter or at a meeting
  - d. At an annual event, name each person who helped



during the year and remind the group what each person did

- e. Ask the volunteer for his/her opinion or advice
- f. Let the person know the results of the project they worked on
- h. If someone goes far above and beyond, hold a block party in their honor or nominate them for an award

## Task Checklist

Items to be completed after the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting. Not all of these tasks need to be done by the Neighborhood Watch organizer; some can be done by Neighborhood Watch members. Feel free to distribute the tasks to make the work manageable.

Task	Who	By When	Completed
<b>Getting organized</b>			
Choose organizer(s)			
Choose liaison to neighborhood association			
Contact households not at initial meeting			
Collect completed Block Profile Questionnaires			
Create paperwork for your communication network, whether Block Map, Block Profile Form, Telephone Tree, and/or Email List			
Copy the paperwork			
Distribute these copies to watch members and to the CPPC			
Schedule regular updates of forms			
<b>Signs</b>			
Decide on number and locations for signs			
Collect money for signs			
Pick up signs from CPPC			
Post signs			
<b>Next meeting</b>			
Decide on frequency of meetings			
Set date and location			
Create and distribute invitations			
Host meeting			
Set agenda			
Bring refreshments			



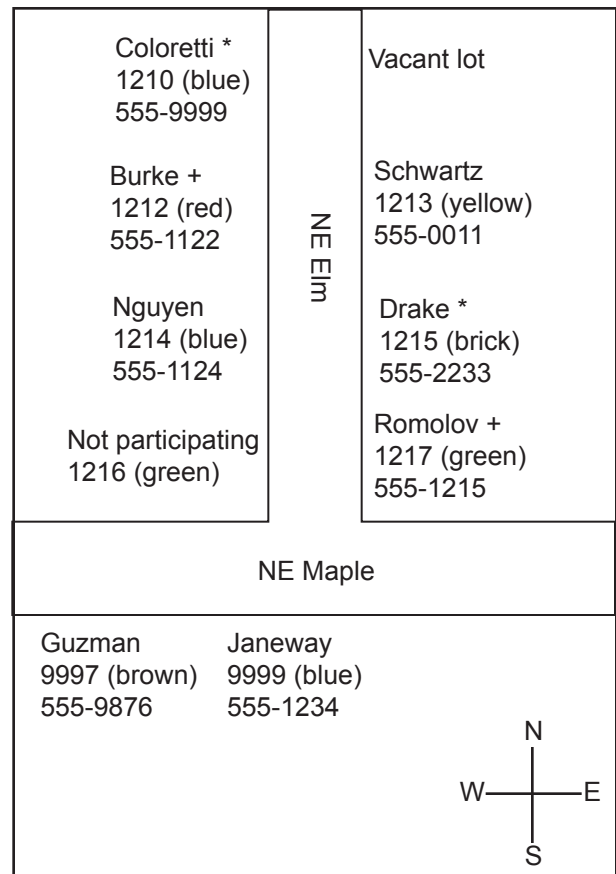
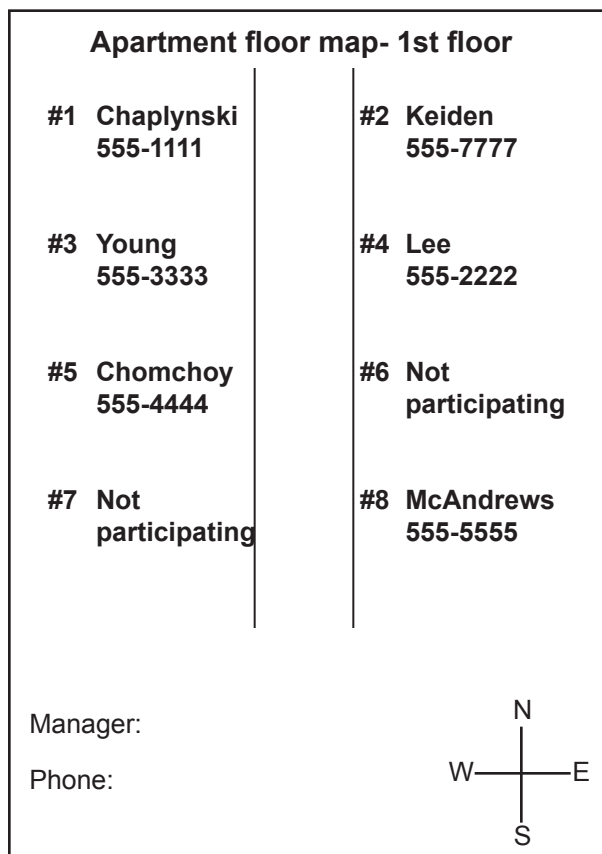
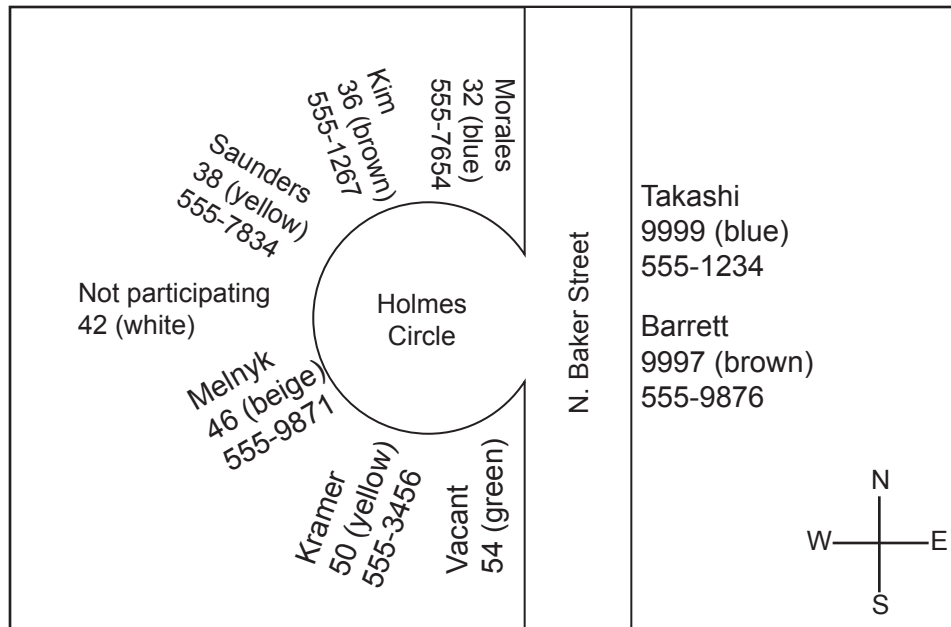
# Sample Block Profile Form

Date compiled: \_\_\_\_\_

Address & house color	Household members names & ages	Phone numbers Home/Work/Emergency	Work schedule	Cars: make/model/ color/license plate #	Medical problems	Alarm? Need to call?	Special skills

## Sample Block Maps

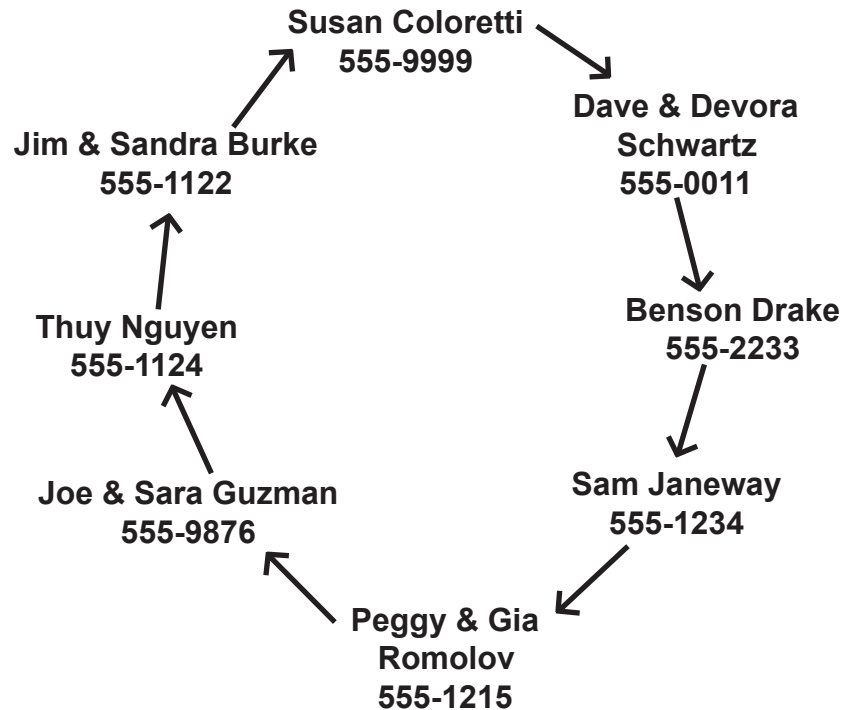
Below are several samples of block maps. When you make your block map, be sure to include (1) house numbers, even if the residents are not participating or the house is vacant; (2) house color; (3) name(s) of resident(s); (4) phone number; (5) street names; (6) any non-residential buildings on your block, such as churches; and (7) a directional compass. Note the symbols after some members' names. These can be used to indicate who knows CPR, or emergency plumbing skills, or any other designation you choose.



## Sample Telephone Tree

Below is a typical Neighborhood Watch telephone tree form, which includes the tree itself and instructions on how to use it.

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### How to use the telephone tree

1. If you see suspicious or criminal activity, first notify the police at 9-1-1 or the non-emergency number, 503-823-3333. Then activate the telephone tree as described below in order to share information about the problem.
2. Call the person in the position after yours on the phone tree to tell them about the problem.
  - a. If you talk to them directly, tell them what the problem is, and ask them to continue the phone tree by calling the person after them.
  - b. If the person you call is not home, leave a message, then call the next person in line. Continue calling until you have reached a live person who can continue the calling.
3. You will know the phone tree has been successfully completed when you receive a call at the end.

Note: You can also activate the phone tree for other purposes, such as to give updates about a crime or suspicious event that already happened for the purpose of rumor control, or to pass on good news, such as the birth of a baby on the block. The Neighborhood Watch organizer can initiate practice runs periodically to ensure the phone tree is working properly.

# Neighborhood Watch organizer(s)

Name	Name
Phone	Phone
Address	Address
Email	Email

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## Frequently used phone numbers

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Emergency police, fire, medical ..... 9-1-1   | OLCC Hotline ..... 503-872-5070<br><i>To report problems with liquor license establishments</i>                                      |
| Non-emergency police ..... 503-823-3333<br><i>Non-emergency criminal activity or "cold" crimes where the suspects have left</i> | Code Enforcement..... 503-823-CODE<br><i>Central number for code violation complaints</i>  |
| City/County Info & Referral ..... 503-823-4000<br><i>Info about city and county services and depts</i>                          | Abandoned Autos ..... 503-823-7309<br><i>Abandoned cars on public streets</i>  |
| Drugs & Vice Division ..... 503-823-DRUG<br><i>To report a possible drug house</i>  | Parking enforcement ..... 503-823-5195<br><i>Illegally parked cars, blocked driveways</i>  |
| Child Abuse Hotline ..... 503-731-3100  | Neighborhood Mediation ..... 503-595-4890<br><i>Mediation for neighborhood disputes</i>  |
| Aging & Disability Services..... 503-988-3646   | Neighborhood Inspection Team .... 503-823-7306<br><i>To report nuisances &amp; housing code violations</i>                           |
| Portland Women's Crisis Line ..... 503-235-5333   | Vector Control ..... 503-988-3464<br><i>To report rodent infestations, mosquito breeding grounds</i>                                 |
| Traffic Safety Line ..... 503-823-SAFE<br><i>To report chronic traffic safety issues at a specific location</i>                 | Mental Health Crisis Line ..... 503-988-4888   |
| Graffiti Hotline ..... 503-823-4TAG<br><i>To report graffiti and initiate clean-up</i>  | Street maintenance hotline ..... 503-823-1700  |
| Animal Control ..... 503-988-3066   | Online reporting of graffiti and liquor problems<br>..... <a href="http://www.portlandonline.com/oni">www.portlandonline.com/oni</a> |
| Noise Control ..... 503-823-7350  |  |



# Block Profile Questionnaire

This information will be used by the Neighborhood Watch organizer to create the Block Map, Block Profile Form, Telephone Tree, and/or Email List. Please complete this form, detach it, and return it to the organizer promptly. Thank you!

**Names of household members** (include children's birth years) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Pets** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**House color** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work phone(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact** (name, relationship, and phone numbers) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Work schedule(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cars** (make/model/color/license number) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Alarm:** (circle one) yes / no

**If yes, should your neighbors call 9-1-1 when they hear your alarm?** (circle one) yes / no

**Special medical problems** (heart conditions, diabetes...) and instructions \_\_\_\_\_

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**Special skills** (CPR, first aid, electrical, plumbing...) \_\_\_\_\_

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**What do you think are the three main problems facing your neighborhood?** \_\_\_\_\_

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