

# INTRODUCTION TO



by  
**neighbors who care**

A COMMUNITY  
CRIME PREVENTION  
PROGRAM  
SPONSORED  
by



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Alternate Languages may be available upon request.  
April 2004



Dear Fairfax County Community Member:

Join the Fairfax County Police Department in preventing crime in your neighborhood by becoming a member of the Neighborhood Watch program. Neighborhood Watch began in 1979 and has flourished steadily with hundreds of community based programs established throughout the county. The success of Neighborhood Watch is due to the cooperative involvement of police and citizens. By donating a small amount of time to observe and report suspicious activities in your neighborhood, we can band together to effectively reduce crime in our community.

The objective of Neighborhood Watch is to organize and train residents to be alert to potential crimes in the neighborhood and keep watchful eyes on their neighbors' homes. This brochure will explain the program elements.

Police officers will assist you in developing security measures for your own home. Receiving a free home security survey and taking property identification measures will help you prevent a burglar from choosing your home as a target. To show you are an active Neighborhood Watch participant, decals will be provided to be placed on windows in your home to deter potential criminals.

Thanks to many thousands of concerned and involved citizens in Fairfax County, our Neighborhood Watch program is a proven success. It is one of the largest such programs in the country and has received national and international recognition.

We are anxious to have you join us in keeping Fairfax County one of the nation's safest large suburban communities. If you are interested, we will be happy to provide you with more information about Neighborhood Watch and how it can benefit you and your neighbors. Please ask us!

Crime Prevention Unit  
Fairfax County Police Department

## NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM BENEFITS

Some neighborhoods may be more susceptible to crime than others; however, everyone should consider establishing a Neighborhood Watch Program. No matter what type of neighborhood: condominium, garden apartment, townhome, or single family home, the benefits are numerous. They include:

### PREVENTION OF CRIME

Fairfax County Neighborhood Watch Programs have aided the Police Department in reducing residential burglaries, thefts of property, vandalism, fraud, sexual assaults and even traffic related offenses. Watch Programs have impact upon crimes in commercial areas of their communities as well as in churches and schools. Crime is rarely stationary and often moves from one neighborhood to another. The establishment of a Neighborhood Watch Program in a low-crime area is added assurance it will remain safe.

### GREATER AWARENESS OF CRIME

Home security and personal safety are enhanced as residents become more aware of the threat of crime. Exposure to crime prevention techniques improves a citizen's ability to remove and reduce opportunities for criminals to act.

### ENHANCED REPORTING OF SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Residents are more aware of who belongs in the community and are more inclined to report suspicious persons and activities to the police. Typically, as the calls for suspicious activities increase, the actual numbers of crimes committed decrease.

### SERVES AS A WARNING TO CRIMINALS

Neighborhood Watch signs alert criminals that residents are concerned about crime and will call the police when suspicious activity is observed. However, signs alone are of little deterrent value when not backed up by an actively participating Neighborhood Watch Program.

### PROMOTES NEIGHBORLINESS

Neighborhood Watch encourages residents to interact with each other, sharing information about work schedules, vacation plans, types of vehicles belonging to their households, etc. It also encourages neighbors to observe the property of others and occasionally attend meetings to strengthen neighborhood safety and security.

### ACCESS TO CRIME DATA

Crime often moves from one neighborhood to another. Obviously, it is important for neighborhoods to be informed about crime trends that may threaten them. Crime Prevention Officers can help identify trends and patterns through crime analysis and routinely notify Neighborhood Watch Coordinators of crime related problems.

### INCREASES ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS

The Neighborhood Watch Program serves as a network through which the Police Department can collect and disseminate information on crime. Although most Watch members should realistically expect to see little in the way of real crime, the benefits of Neighborhood Watch to both citizens and the criminal justice system are proven every day.

## HOW DO YOU CONTACT THE POLICE

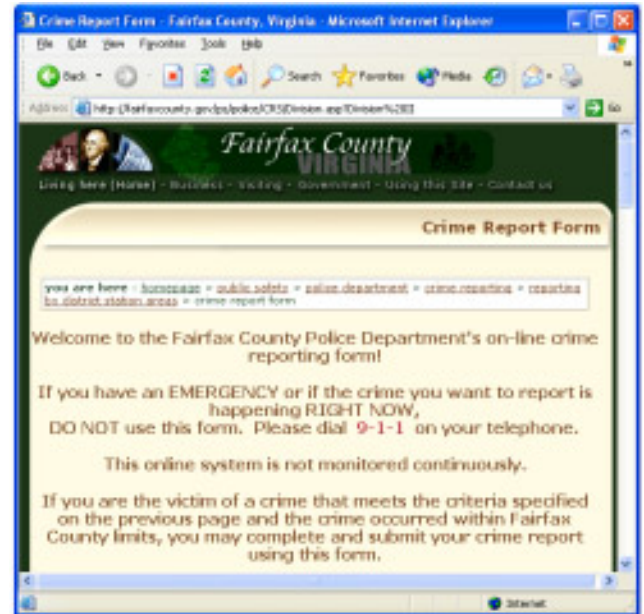
Use the police, fire and rescue emergency number, 911, for crimes in progress and events which are life-threatening or immediately damaging to property.

Call the **non-emergency** number, 703-691-2131, to report crimes which already occurred and when the suspect is no longer in the area, or to advise police of suspicious activity.

Use the Internet to report the following types of incidents:

- Alcohol Violations
- Destruction of Property
- Larceny up to \$5000
- Lost Property
- Prescription Fraud/Forgery
- Suspicious Events/Persons/Vehicles
- Telephone Harassment
- Vehicle Tampering
- Civil Disputes
- Disorderly Conduct
- Loitering
- Noise Violations
- Solicitor Violations
- Trespassing
- Telephone Threats

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ps/police/CRS/CRSDiscl.htm>



## WHAT INFORMATION THE POLICE NEED

You will be asked for your name, address and phone number. This information is requested in case additional contact with you is necessary, but you do not have to provide this information if you do not want to. If you wish, you may provide us with just a call back number we can use if our initial information was wrong or the situation has changed before an officer arrives. Any information provided to the police department is kept confidential. If you do not want personal contact with the responding officer, say so.

**The most important information needed by the police is:**

**What happened?**

**When did this happen?**

**Where did this occur? We need the exact street address, intersecting roads, or common places such as name of shopping centers or schools, etc.**

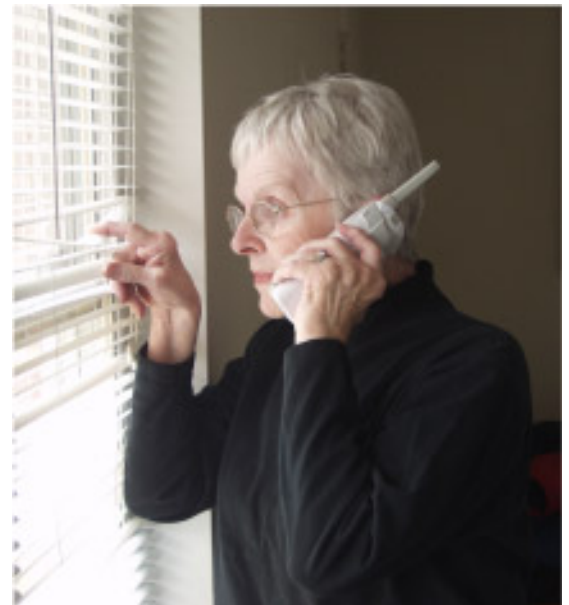
**Is anyone hurt?**

**License plate numbers and vehicle descriptions.**

**Direction of travel.**

**Description(s) of suspect(s)**

**Are weapons involved?**



By acting quickly and calmly, your request for police service could foil a crime, help to identify suspects involved in other crimes, or deter a criminal act by letting potential suspects know that you and your neighbors are alert to suspicious activity, suspicious vehicles and suspicious persons.

It has been proven that in neighborhoods where citizens have joined together to look out for each other's safety, the incidence of burglaries and other crimes against property has been significantly reduced. Knowing who your neighbors are is the first step in this program. The next step is to be involved in a Neighborhood Watch in your community

## WHY YOU SHOULD CALL THE POLICE

Successful efforts to combat crime require the cooperative involvement of police and citizens. The police cannot be everywhere. For this reason, success against crime is dependent on citizen cooperation and involvement. Many crimes could be prevented if more citizens were alert to suspicious activity and notified the police.

## WHEN YOU SHOULD CALL THE POLICE

Whenever you observe suspicious events, even though you may not be the only person observing them, call the police. Never think the next person will do what you should. The police would rather get numerous calls on the same event than none at all.

Often citizens fail to call the police because they are not sure if what they see is suspicious. If you are in doubt, call the police immediately. Don't wait to talk it over with friends or neighbors. Valuable police response time is lost this way.

Don't be concerned about bothering us because you won't. Don't dwell on your possible embarrassment if your call should prove to be unfounded. Think instead of what could have happened had you not called. You or your loved ones could become the victims of a criminal act.

## WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS?

- A stranger enters your neighbor's home while your neighbor is away or someone crosses your neighbor's yard with no apparent lawful purpose.
- Someone tries to open a neighbor's door
- A moving truck or van pulls up to a neighbor's home while they are gone.
- Remember, burglaries often occur at times when they should be most obvious - in broad daylight, in full view of observers, with no effort at subterfuge.
- Someone is carrying property such as television sets, radios, stereos, etc., at an unusually late hour or in an unusual place, especially if it does not appear that the property is newly purchased.
- The sound of shattering glass could signal a possible burglary, vandalism or larceny in progress.
- Anyone peering into vehicles while walking down a street or someone removing license plates, gasoline or parts from a car; someone attempting to enter a car using a coat hanger or other device. Never assume that it is the owner who has locked the keys in the car. Be suspicious of anyone tampering with the hood or trunk of a car.
- An improperly parked car or an abandoned vehicle, or someone leaving one car and driving away in another. These may be signs of a stolen vehicle.
- Anyone being forced into a vehicle could be the victim of a possible abduction.
- Persons loitering around schools, parks, isolated areas, or in the neighborhood. Loiterers could be possible sex offenders or burglars.
- Anyone on school, church, or cemetery property after dark and not taking part in an approved activity.
- Business transactions conducted from a vehicle and often involving juveniles, a steady flow of strangers to and from a particular house on a regular basis at unusual times or late hours. This could indicate drug sales or a fencing operation.
- Offers of goods or repair work at unusually low prices could indicate stolen property or some kind of fraud.

## TYPES OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS

Neighborhood Watch is simply a crime prevention concept that calls for citizens to watch out for their neighbors' property. When criminals are aware of a Neighborhood Watch, they are generally unwilling to risk detection. They either don't commit the crime, or go elsewhere.

Because neighborhoods are different in terms of geography, population, and the extent and nature of crime, Neighborhood Watch programs must vary from area to area if they are to be successful. Whereas criminals may be dissuaded from committing a crime in one neighborhood using passive observation, they may be willing to take the risk in a more rural community using the same basic strategy.

Neighborhood Watch program variations include:

### *Passive Observation*

Passive Observation is being on the lookout and paying attention to details as you are going about your daily routine. Reporting all unusual activity, as well as suspicious people and vehicles to the police is the cornerstone of any Neighborhood Watch program. Although this is an effective way to combat crime, Passive Observation should be used to complement other types of Neighborhood Watch Programs.

### *Window Watching*

Window Watchers are often residents house-bound for reasons of health, advanced age, disability, being a single parent or being a primary caregiver in the home. Window Watchers should set a routine to follow. Whether checking every 15 minutes or more or less often, they should be aware of the responsibility, and make an effort to stay to their routine.

### *Walking Patrols*

Many Neighborhood Watch programs assign residents to walk within a defined area to actively look for suspicious activities. Active, scheduled, patrols are only done in pairs (i.e., husband and wife or two neighbors) during the time periods that crime is most likely to occur. Upon observing suspicious activities, walking patrols are to contact the police either by radioing their base station operator, using a cellular phone, or going to a preplanned location to use a neighbor's phone. Patrol members are cautioned against personal intervention or confrontation.

### *Mobile Patrols*

Such patrols are frequently used in larger communities or where homes are spaced a considerable distance from one another, making Window Watch and Walking Patrols impractical. Mobile patrols are normally used during high crime periods and many use cellular telephones for communicating suspicious activities or persons. Other forms of communications available are FM band hand-held radios or citizen band (CB) radios.



**NOTE:** *Neighborhood Watch is designed to prevent, detect and report crimes. Enforcement action is always left to the Police Department.*



## THREE WAYS YOU CAN BE A PART OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH!

### 1. BE INVOLVED

The purpose of Neighborhood Watch is to use highly visible citizen observers to deter crime. Members report crimes and suspicious situations to the police. They participate in educating their community in public safety practices. Join with your neighbors in volunteering your eyes and your ears on a regular basis to watch your neighborhood and report anything suspicious to the Fairfax County Police Department. Thieves and vandals are likely to go elsewhere when they know Neighborhood Watch is "all eyes" for them! Contact the Crime Prevention Officer at your police district station for assistance in organizing and training citizen patrol volunteers in your neighborhood.

### 2. FREE HOME SECURITY INSPECTION

A qualified, trained Fairfax County Police officer or auxiliary officer will inspect the locks, doors and windows of your home with you. Exterior lighting, landscaping and other factors affecting the protection of your home from burglary also will be reviewed. The officer will make recommendations for improving your home security. You can arrange for a free inspection at your convenience by calling your district station's Crime Prevention Officer.

### 3. PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION

A Fairfax County Police officer will instruct you on how to properly mark your property so it can be identified and how to make an inventory of your valuables. Property identification discourages thieves and makes fencing of stolen property more difficult. When recovered stolen property can be identified, it can be used as evidence against the thief and also returned to its owner by police.

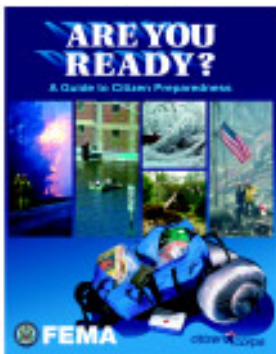
Engravers may be borrowed and forms obtained from Fairfax County Public Libraries. Engrave your complete driver's license number (all nine digits) and the letters VA or the appropriate abbreviation for the state in which your driver's license is issued (i.e., VA123456789). Use of this number is recommended because of the speed with which the property owner's name and address can be obtained through police computer systems.

#### *Include the Following Information only in Your Inventory Record:*

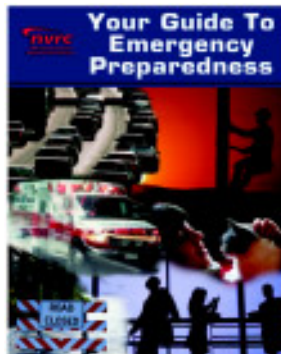
- \* Your social security number
  - \* Item marked, Make, Model, Size, Color, Serial Number, and where mark was placed
- Keep this information in a safe location!

## DOES YOUR FAMILY HAVE A PLAN? ARE YOU READY?

September 11, 2001, started out as every other day but ended with a world of change. Being prepared for any disaster requires proper planning. In the event of a crisis, whether man-made or a natural event such as a hurricane or major snowstorm, communities may be required to be self-sufficient for a period of time. Having plans in place will ensure we make it through the difficult times. Neighborhood Watch is a program designed to help build a stronger community. By participating and being active in your community's program, you help to assure that you are prepared when the time comes. Additional information on preparedness is available from the following sources:



Copies of "*Are You Ready? A Guide to Citizen Preparedness*," are available through the FEMA Publications warehouse (1.800.480.2520) or from the Internet at:  
<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/>



"*Your Guide to Emergency Preparedness*" Alternative formats of this publication can be made available for persons with special needs. Call 703-324-3187  
TTY 703-324-2935  
from the Internet at:  
<http://fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/emergencyprep.pdf>  
Translated text versions are available at:  
<http://fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/>

**SULLY DISTRICT STATION**

4900 Stonecroft Boulevard  
Chantilly, VA 20151  
703-814-7000 Main  
703-814-7018 Crime Prevention  
e-mail SulCPO@fairfaxcounty.gov

**MCLEAN DISTRICT STATION**

1437 Balls Hill Road  
McLean, VA 22101  
703-556-7750 Main  
703-734-0756 Crime Prevention  
e-mail cpo.mclean@fairfaxcounty.gov

**RESTON DISTRICT STATION**

12000 Bowman Towne Drive  
Reston, VA 20190  
703-478-0904 Main  
703-478-0799 Crime Prevention  
e-mail RestonCPO@fairfaxcounty.gov

**WEST SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT STATION**

6140 Rolling Road  
Springfield, VA 22152  
703-644-7377 Main  
703-644-5026 Crime Prevention  
e-mail wscppo@fairfaxcounty.gov

**MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT STATION**

2511 Parkers Lane  
Alexandria, VA 22306  
703-360-8400 Main  
703-360-8928 Crime Prevention  
e-mail mtvcpo@fairfaxcounty.gov

**MASON DISTRICT STATION**

6507 Columbia Pike  
Annandale, VA 22003  
703-256-8035 Main  
703-354-5889 Crime Prevention  
e-mail NW.mason@fairfaxcounty.gov

**FRANCONIA DISTRICT STATION**

6121 Franconia Road  
Alexandria, VA 22310  
703-922-0889 Main  
703-922-8263 Crime Prevention  
e-mail fracpo@fairfaxcounty.gov

**FAIR OAKS DISTRICT STATION**

12300 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway  
Fairfax, VA 22033  
703-591-0966 Main  
703-352-2163 Crime Prevention  
e-mail faocpo@fairfaxcounty.gov