

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

THE HANDBOOK



El Paso County Sheriff's Office

27 East Vermijo Avenue
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

www.epsheriffsoffice.com

Why Start a Neighborhood Watch?

The major goals of the program are:

- To make citizens, their families, and their homes less vulnerable to crime.
- To increase cooperation between citizens and law enforcement to help make communities safer.

Resources for law enforcement are not infinite. The number of calls for service compared to the number of available deputies does not always allow for an immediate response.

There are many benefits to forming a watch group. You become better acquainted with your neighbors; you learn how to keep your home and family safer; you become better prepared to respond to suspicious or criminal activity; and you help to make your community a better place to live with a proactive approach to fighting crime.

When you and your neighbors form a watch group, you make it known that you will not tolerate criminal activity in your community. By looking out for each other, securing your homes and your possessions, posting Neighborhood Watch signs and reporting suspicious activity, you make your community less attractive for potential criminals.



WHAT QUALIFIES AS *SUSPICIOUS*?

Anything or anyone who seems out of place in an otherwise “normal” environment is suspicious. For example:

- Open or broken doors or windows at a residence where no one is home, or if the home is known to be vacant, or at a business that is supposedly closed.
- Unusual noises, like glass breaking, crashing sounds, gunshots, screaming, or dogs barking continuously.
- Someone loitering or peering into windows of cars or homes, or trying door handles to see if they are locked.

Do not attempt to confront a person involved in suspicious behavior yourself. Call 911 for a crime in progress.

What Does Neighborhood Watch Mean to You?



Neighborhood Watch Program

Members of Neighborhood Watch groups have three main responsibilities: **Observation, Communication, and Security.**



Observation is paying attention to what is happening around you. Keep an eye out for your neighbors and their property as well as your own. Be familiar with people who have legitimate reasons to be in the area—and pay attention to those who don't. Residents are the best authority as to what is normal and acceptable for their neighborhood.



Communication is simply passing on your observations or any information that you receive. If you witness suspicious behavior or discover a crime, report it to the Sheriff's Office immediately. Occasionally, block captains may receive bulletins from the Sheriff's Office if a very serious crime or patterns of crime have occurred in their area. That information should be reported to group members so they are aware of the incidents.



Security involves taking a critical look at your own home, your habits, and the entire neighborhood to ensure the area is not inviting to potential criminals. This includes assessing and possibly upgrading physical security measures, locks, lighting, and other features to create the safest environment possible.

How to Get Your Group Started

The first step is to speak with your neighbors and find out if they are interested in starting a group. Once you have enough people who wish to get involved, set up a date, time, and location for the initial meeting. Please call the **Crime Prevention Coordinator at 520-7151** at least two weeks in advance of your meeting date in order to secure the attendance of someone from the Sheriff's Office to talk about Neighborhood Watch, help get your group started, and discuss any current issues in your area.

Since neighborhoods vary, we recommend each group adjust their program as necessary. However, we do ask that each group meet the following requirements:



- There should be at least five homes/families involved from the same street, road, or cul-de-sac. This can be adjusted as needed for rural and less densely-populated areas.
- The group should hold at least two to three meetings a year.
- Neighborhood Watch signs delineating the watch area will be posted according to Sheriff's Office policy.
- A block captain should be chosen for every five to ten homes. This person will maintain the list of participants for their area and update the Crime Prevention Coordinator about membership/status changes to their group.
- Block captains will be in charge of communication among group members and the Sheriff's Office. This includes forwarding newsletters, bulletins and other important information sent by the Sheriff's Office to block captains or to their group members, as well as alerting the Sheriff's Office concerning suspicious activity.
- Block captains can request crime prevention presentations by the Crime Prevention Coordinator for group meetings, giving a few weeks advance notice whenever possible.

How to Keep Your Neighborhood Watch Program Going Strong

Participate as a group. Communicate often with neighbors, letting them know if anything unusual occurs or about upcoming events. Welcome new residents and inform them about neighborhood programs, including Neighborhood Watch.

Try to schedule Neighborhood Watch meetings at regular intervals, so people know in advance when they will occur. Turn these meetings into neighborhood picnics, block parties, or holiday gatherings. Include the kids in neighborhood plans and parties.

Hold a neighborhood clean-up day. Work on a local park or common areas in the neighborhood. Offer to help residents who may need assistance with keeping up their yards. Do their trees need trimming? Does their fence need minor repairs? If their yard looks better, so does your neighborhood.

Find out about classes you can attend as a group, such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), offered by the El Paso County Sheriff's Office.



Participate in annual National Night Out events. The first Tuesday in August is celebrated nationally as a way for citizens to support crime prevention and send a message to criminals that they are fighting back. Neighborhoods can have block parties or other events. Representatives from the El Paso County Sheriff's Office try to attend as many events as possible.

TIPS

- Publicize your meeting at least one week in advance.
- Talk to your neighbors about it in person, if possible.
- Make sure your meeting location is easily accessible and ensure you have chosen the most convenient time possible for the largest number of residents. (A Sheriff's Office representative is normally available for evening and weekend meetings).

Additional Sheriff's Office Resources

Citizens' Academy:

719-520-7216

The Citizens' Academy gives citizens an inside look at the various functions of the Sheriff's Office. Participants tour the El Paso County Jail and courthouse,, go on a ride-along with a deputy and learn about the responsibilities of each division from the staff who work there.

Sheriff's Citizen Patrol:

719-520-7216

This program utilizes citizen volunteers to perform law enforcement-related duties that do not require sworn officers, including traffic control, parking issues, and crime prevention.

Ride-Along Program:

719-520-7270

This program allows citizens to ride with patrol deputies during normal shifts so they can observe incidents and situations deputies respond to every day.

9-1-1 Education:

719-390-5555

The Communications Center offers instruction concerning how Emergency Medical Dispatch works and the proper use of 9-1-1.

Victim Assistance Program:

719-520-7272

Full-time professional staff employees and dedicated victim advocate volunteers are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to assist crime victims and their families.

Volunteer Coordinator:

719-520-7216

The Volunteer Coordinator can provide information on volunteer opportunities available throughout the El Paso County Sheriff's Office.

Crime Tips:

719-520-7777

This is a non-emergent tip line which is checked during business hours. Tips requiring immediate action should be given to the El Paso County Dispatch Center at 390-5555.

Community Affairs & Research:

shrcommunity@elpasoco.com

This unit coordinates EPSO participation at community events, strengthens relationships within the community and supports a healthy interaction between law enforcement and the community we serve.

Helpful Phone Numbers



El Paso County Sheriff's Office
(non-emergency Dispatch number)

(719) 390-5555

epcsheriffsoffice.com



Colorado Springs Police
Department

(non-emergency Dispatch number)

(719) 444-7000

coloradosprings.gov/police-department



Fountain Police Department
(non-emergency Dispatch number)

(719) 382-8555

fountaincolorado.org



Colorado State Patrol

(non-emergency Dispatch number)

(719) 544-2424

csp.state.co.us



Colorado Department of
Transportation

(Road Conditions)

(877) 315-7623

cotrip.org



El Paso County Department of
Transportation

(719) 520-6460

Emergencies

9-1-1



Crime Prevention & Neighborhood Watch
Coordinator

Office: (719) 520-7151

NeighborhoodWatch@elpasoco.com

SCAN HERE
FOR MORE
INFORMATION



flowcode.com/page/crimeprevention