

PROGRAMS		1403.00		
		NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM		
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CONTENTS

This procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
- II. NEXTDOOR.COM
- III. SOCIAL MEDIA

PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to establish guidelines for the assistance and support of the Punta Gorda Police Department by the community to help prevent crime by practicing crime-fighting measures that help to deter crime and help citizens avoid becoming victims of crimes.

SCOPE

This procedure shall apply to all Punta Gorda Police Department personnel and neighborhood watch participants.

DISCUSSION

The Punta Gorda Police Department recognizes the many successes of the traditional Neighborhood Watch Program. However, due to evolving technologies and enhanced forms of communication, the Punta Gorda Police Department will be transitioning away from traditional methods and embracing technology and the internet as a means of communicating more information faster and more efficiently.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Neighborhood Watch:** A group of people living in close proximity who participate in a structured program of systematic local vigilance in conjunction with local law enforcement to discourage crime and improve their quality of life.
2. **Suspicious Activity:** Any incident, event, individual or activity that seems unusual or out of place.

Examples of suspicious activity:

There are many examples, but these are some of the most common:

- Screaming or shouting
- Breaking glass or other loud explosive noises
- Looking into vehicle / house windows, appear to be trying doors
- Loitering in front of a home or business
- Exhibiting unusual mental or physical behavior
- Heavy foot / vehicle traffic may indicate narcotics activity
- Vehicle driving without lights at night
- Transactions conducted from a vehicle
- The unfamiliar abandoned vehicle

This list is not inclusive of all circumstances

PROCEDURE

I. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

A. The Community Services Supervisor or designee shall:

1. Be responsible for communicating with and acting as the liaison between Neighborhood Watch Block Captains and the Punta Gorda Police Department.
2. Maintain a database of all active Neighborhood Watch participants and Block Captains.
3. Conduct periodic checks with Block Captains.
4. Make available a copy of the Punta Gorda Police Department's Standard Operating Procedure 1303.00 - *Neighborhood Watch Program*.
5. Be responsible for the placement and maintenance of Neighborhood Watch signs.

B. Block Captains Duties and Responsibilities

1. The Block Captains will be the liaison between residents and the police department for Neighborhood Watch Program concerns, identify crime problems, needs for assistance, and suggestions for program improvement.
2. Establish and maintain a list of participant's name, residential and email address, and phone number(s).
3. Inviting new and existing residents to participate in Neighborhood Watch.

C. Participant Guidelines

1. Participants shall observe and report criminal or suspicious activity and shall not stop, detain, or hinder any person from moving about freely;
2. Participants shall not approach or confront the individual(s).
3. Participants shall not pursue the individual (s) or participate in any type of chase or pursuit
4. Participants shall not attempt to enforce any laws.
5. Participants shall not trespass on private property.
6. Participants shall take no action which will create personal risk to themselves or the general public.
7. Participants shall not identify themselves as a representative of the Punta Gorda Police Department.
8. Participant shall not check or inspect a suspected crime scene.
9. The PGPD recognizes citizen's rights to bear arms / CCW. Usage of these implements must be consistent with Florida State Statute.

D. Procedures for Reporting to Police

1. Dial 911 if you are reporting a crime or suspicious activity.
2. Report detailed information as quickly as possible about suspicious activity, persons, and/or criminal activity.
3. When reporting a crime or suspicious activity:
 - a. Identify yourself by name;

- b. Identify the type of incident (burglary, assault, suspicious persons or vehicles, etc.);
- c. Describe if a crime is in-progress or has occurred. Be sure to note time of occurrence;
- d. Describe the location. (address, street name and nearest cross street / business name, house number....etc.)
- e. Describe the vehicle; color, year, make, model, body style, license number and direction of travel;
- f. Describe the person; male, female, approximate age, height, weight, hair color, what they are wearing; and
- g. Describe if there are any tools/weapons.

II. **NEXTDOOR.COM:** The Community Services Supervisor and/or Public Information Officer shall be responsible for maintaining the agency's Nextdoor.com account, a resident-only social networking site to communicate with members to identify crime problems, needs for assistance, and suggestions for program improvement.

III. **SOCIAL MEDIA:** The Public Information Officer shall also be responsible for maintaining the agency's Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts. These are open to the public and are valuable tools for safety education and promotion of community involvement. This will also serve as an additional means to communicate and identify crime problems, needs for assistance, and suggestions for program improvement.

APPROVED



PAMELA R. SMITH, CHIEF OF POLICE

STAFF REVIEW DATES: 08-29-2014, 01-24-2017, 03-20-2019, 09-27-2021, 03-07-2024, 03-12-2026

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