

# **Bloomington Neighborhood Watch Program**

## **Endorsed by the Bloomington Police Department**



Bloomington Police Department  
220 E 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
Non-Emergency Number: 812-339-4477  
For Emergencies Dial 911

This program is designed to assist community members of Bloomington by enhancing neighborhood security. This program utilizes the power of observation and mutual assistance among neighbors in the form of organized neighborhood watches.

The days of the traditional neighborhood feel, where everyone knows everyone, have largely changed. The composition of many of our Bloomington neighborhoods remain constantly shifting. In the age of social networking and online communication, we tend not to seek out interactions with unfamiliar people, including our neighbors. An unintended consequence of this proximal disconnection is increased criminal opportunity and community vulnerability.

Neighborhood watch groups can help reduce crime in a variety of ways:

- They increase situational awareness by drawing attention to things other people might not notice, such as loitering or unfamiliar traffic.
- They inform residents in the area how to better secure their property.
- They develop a neighborhood action coalition where neighbors help watch out for each other's property and wellbeing.
- They help neighbors learn to identify suspicious activity and how to report any such activity to the police department.
- They encourage ALL neighborhood residents to participate and cooperate with the police department to reduce crime.

## **Reporting Suspicious Activity**

The effectiveness of the police department's crime prevention effort starts with you. It is impossible for the police department to have eyes everywhere, all the time. We rely on upstanding community members engaging in active observation of their surroundings. Crime prevention efforts are supported by active participation by members of our community, as well as swift reporting of any suspicious behavior to police dispatch as soon as possible and by providing as much information as possible. Individuals should not be concerned with fears of being a 'nosy neighbor', a belief someone else may have called, the fear that they are 'bothering' the police department, or perceived embarrassment as a result of reported suspicious activity later being proven a non-issue. It is important to remember we work as a team, and if the police department is not informed of possible criminal activity, we cannot respond.

## **What a Criminal Looks Like**

Criminals come in all shapes, sizes, and ages. They are not limited to certain hours, dressing in a certain manner, or a certain modus operandi. They may have watched to see when the neighborhood is less active and fewer people are home. They often commit crimes quickly, and leave the area swiftly.

## **How to Report Information to the Police Dispatcher**

- When you call to report an incident or suspicious activity make sure you stay on the line until the dispatcher ends the conversation.
- Begin by providing the location of the incident, followed by describing the situation in as much detail as possible, including information about physical characteristics of the suspect(s), a vehicle description if applicable, and direction of travel if the suspect(s)

abscond from the area.

- Provide your name, a contact number, and your location in case the dispatcher needs to call you for further information or put you in contact with the responding officer.

## **What to Observe for:**

- Any individuals traveling door to door in the neighborhood. Any salesperson traveling door-to-door in Bloomington should have a permit from the City of Bloomington. Many salespeople are legitimate. If they are attempting to open doors or begin looking in windows, however, you should contact the police department immediately. Sales representatives should be in possession of some type of company identification, which you should request to see when interacting with a salesperson. If the salesperson says anything that seems odd or out of place, or otherwise acts in a suspicious manner, end the interaction and notify the police department.
- People casually walking through your neighborhood. This can be considered suspicious if they are exhibiting unusual behavior, if they are walking around late at night, or if they are looking into windows, automobiles, or backyards.
- Unfamiliar vehicles or individuals. Oftentimes, a burglar will park a short distance away and walk to the target residence, move slowly as though to not draw attention, drive without their headlights on (if dark) through a neighborhood, and/or appear to be traveling aimlessly or repetitively throughout an area. Also watch for multiple occupied vehicles that appear to be conducting transactions between them.
- Anyone carrying property, exhibiting signs of intoxication, or mental illness.

## **Where to Start:**

- Below is a checklist for Starting a Neighborhood Watch Program
- See also the 'Evaluating Your Neighborhood Watch Program' document that is available via the City of Bloomington Police Department webpage for community policing and neighborhood watch.

# Checklist for Citizen Patrols

*(Adapted from National Crime Prevention Council's Checklist)*

(Based on a Neighborhood Watch group)

The main purposes of Citizen Patrols are:

- To provide a visible presence that identifies and dissuades criminal activity
- To report incidents and problems to police

The characteristics of Citizen Patrols include:

- Have support for and be supported by the mission of local law enforcement
- No policing powers
- Refrain from carrying weapons of any kind
- Are courteous and helpful to residents
- Coordinate with law enforcement
- Work in teams
- Always carry a flashlight (if it is dark)
- Keep logs of incidents and reports that have been filed within your neighborhood

Additional characteristics of Citizen Patrols may include:

- Wear identifying clothing such as t-shirts, caps, vests, or jackets
- Identifying and reporting neighborhood nuisance concerns
- Identifying and reporting graffiti sites
- Checking on homebound residents
- Identifying and reporting abandoned vehicles