

NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCKWATCH COORDINATOR'S MANUAL



PROPERTY OF THE GILBERT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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What is a Neighborhood Block Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is:

1. Citizens and police working in partnership to reduce crimes and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods.
2. A cohesive body of concerned citizens addressing issues that concern the entire community.
3. Neighbors getting to know each other, taking the time to care about each other and working together in a program of mutual assistance.

Why Neighborhood Watch?

Whether you live in a high crime area or not, a comprehensive Neighborhood Watch Program holds many rewards for your family and neighborhood.

Neighborhood Watch programs instill a greater sense of security and reduce the fear of crime in your community.

The residents that live in an area know the needs of the area better than anyone . By communicating with each other and working together as a team, your community can make a difference.



Some benefits of Neighborhood Watch are:

1. Reducing the risk of becoming a victim of crime. The risk is reduced because participants are taught to take preventative measures to substantially decrease the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Law enforcement agencies report that Neighborhood Watch Programs reduce the risks of home burglaries, vandalism, personal assault, and fraud. Active Neighborhood Watch groups take control of their streets so that gangs and other criminals can not.
2. Being better prepared to respond to suspicious activity. Communication between the neighborhood and the police department is crucial. Part of the Neighborhood Watch Program is learning how to identify and report suspicious activity. You will also learn to provide the police with the information that they need to resolve the issue.

3. Information that impacts your neighborhood. Neighborhood Watch Programs are designed to keep participants apprised of trends in criminal activity so that they will be better prepared to prevent it from occurring in their neighborhood. A crime prevention newsletter is sent to all participating groups with additional information.
4. Obtaining Neighborhood Watch signs to post in your neighborhood. Criminals know that if a neighborhood has a Neighborhood Watch sign posted, the neighborhood is not an easy target. It is a notice that the neighborhood is organized and does not tolerate criminal activity in the area. The sign is proof that your neighborhood has safeguards in place to detect crime and report suspicious activity to the police.
5. Knowing your neighbors. Neighborhood Watch promotes getting to know your neighbors and their patterns. You will learn to be aware of activity that does not fit with regular schedules. This means that when you are away, you can feel more secure about your property. This also instills a sense of community.
6. Reducing the fear of crime and making your neighborhood more livable. Neighborhood Watch increases the number of arrests and convictions by serving as a conduit between law enforcement and the community.
7. Allowing other areas of concern to be addressed. Neighborhood Watch participants can address other issues that concern their neighborhood or community. You might choose to focus your attention on areas such as: recreational areas for children, neighborhood revitalization, fire prevention, or school safety programs.

How much work is involved in a Neighborhood Watch?

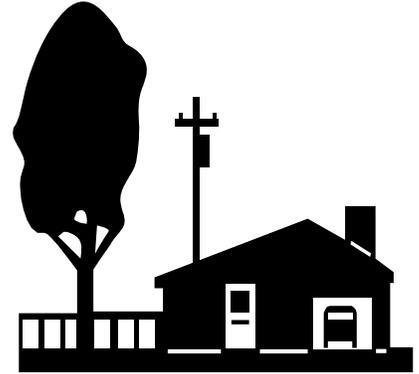
That depends on your neighborhood. Some neighborhoods have significant areas of concern that need to be addressed. Other neighborhoods might want to simply maintain their area and do not need to devote a great deal of time to a program. Your limitations are those that you set for yourself.

What are the responsibilities of the Neighborhood Watch Captain?

The role of the Neighborhood Watch Captain is to serve as the coordinator and liaison for the Neighborhood Watch Group. It is up to the Neighborhood Watch Captain to coordinate and delegate the responsibilities of their Neighborhood Watch group. This includes the following:

1. Maintain an updated list of all member names, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers.
2. Set-up a communication network for your area. This might include creating a telephone tree or neighborhood map. These forms are included in this manual.

3. Distribute information to your neighborhood, which is sent to you by the Gilbert Police Department.
4. Provide sign-in sheets for attendees to sign at your Block Watch function. These sign-in sheets will be mailed or faxed to the Gilbert Police Department as proof of attendance at your event. You should also maintain copies for your records. Required sign-in sheets are provided in this manual.
5. Set-up a working committee of Co-Captains to assist with your neighborhood activities.
6. Greet new neighbors that move into the neighborhood. Have a welcome packet available to hand them with information on the Block Watch. Encourage them to get involved and be included in the Neighborhood mailing list.
7. Should you decide to discontinue serving as the Neighborhood Block Watch Captain, a letter **MUST** be sent to the Gilbert Police Department. It would be beneficial to the Neighborhood if an alternate representative is established so that you maintain Block Watch status.
8. To maintain an "Active" status, the Neighborhood Watch group **MUST** have at least one meeting or activity during each calendar year. You must also follow the sticker signage renewal program as discussed on page 9 of this manual.



Subject to the rights, if any, of a Neighborhood Watch Captain, a Neighborhood Watch Captain may be removed with cause by the Gilbert Police Department or for acts contrary to the goals of the program.

What are the ideal characteristics of a Neighborhood Watch Captain?

Every neighborhood and Neighborhood Watch Captain is unique. The ideal Neighborhood Watch Captain would have the following attributes:

1. An outgoing personality that truly cares about people
2. A sincere desire to better the neighborhood
3. Live in the neighborhood where they are Captain
4. Do not have a criminal record
5. Organized and detail orientated
6. Creative and willing to try new things
7. Excellent communication skills

What are the responsibilities of Neighborhood Watch Members?

Everyone participating in Neighborhood Watch plays a significant role in the success of the program. Residents should:

1. Learn neighbors' names and be able to recognize them and their vehicles.
2. Keep a copy of the neighborhood telephone tree and neighborhood map in an easily accessible place and update it with new information.
3. Attend Neighborhood Watch meetings and activities.
4. Be alert to unusual or suspicious behavior in your neighborhood, utilize your phone tree, and inform your Neighborhood Watch captain. Call the police department if warranted ({emergency only 9-1-1} {non-emergencies (480)503-6500}).
5. Do not take any risks to prevent a crime or try to make an arrest. Remember, your job is to report crime. Apprehending criminals is the responsibility of the professionals at the Police Department.
6. Display Neighborhood Watch window decals in a prominent place at your home.
7. Watch your neighbors' homes when they are away. Ask them to return the favor. This includes picking up mail/newspapers, and putting back garbage cans if left out. Do not leave signals that say, "no one is home."
8. It is recommended that you schedule a Home Security Survey by calling a Crime Prevention Specialist. It is crucial that you implement any recommendations that they might offer.
9. Above all, become involved. It is the most effective way to reduce/prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe.

Why do I need to know my neighbors?

Getting to know your neighbors, their families, their habits, etc.; is one of the most important aspects of a successful Neighborhood Watch Program. Knowing these aspects of your neighbors' lives will allow you to respond effectively to most emergency situations. This may help you to prevent a crime or even save a life. After all, how will you know if something is "out of the ordinary" if you do not know what is "ordinary"?

What is a Neighborhood Watch Map?

A Neighborhood Watch Map is designed to denote the precise location of each individual on your streets. If you decide to design a Neighborhood map, it should include home addresses, names of the occupants, telephone numbers, and a directional compass. These maps should be kept in a place that is easily accessible to family members, yet safe from strangers. Sharing personal information is voluntary – you cannot force or require anyone to release their personal information. If someone chooses not to share their personal information, they are still welcome to participate in the neighborhood Watch Program. **Remember, if you do decide to develop a neighborhood map, a copy must be sent to the Gilbert Police Department Crime Prevention Unit.**

How do I develop and use a telephone tree?

In this manual, you will find an example of a telephone tree, which you can copy and use as your own. A telephone tree is a tool that allows you to communicate with each member of your Neighborhood Watch Program in an efficient manner. Each person is designated to call one or two names until all homes have been notified as to what is happening. It is important to keep calling the homes you are assigned to until they are notified of the incident or emergency. Participation in the telephone tree is also voluntary and should not be a prerequisite to participating in a Neighborhood Watch Program.



When activating a call from inside the telephone tree either the participant at the top of the list or Neighborhood Watch Captain should be called first. In the event of emergency, call 9-1-1 immediately. Once contacted by someone on the tree, make sure that the message is written down so that the information you pass along is accurate. If you are unable to reach those homes directly below you, contact the homes next in line. Continue calling those homes that were not contacted until they are reached. The homes at the bottom of the tree are to call the individual at the top to indicate they have received the message. This closes the loop of communication. It is suggested that the Captain maintain a log of phone tree activities.

How do I start a Neighborhood Watch Program?



Review the enclosed materials and discuss the idea of starting a Neighborhood Watch program with your immediate neighbors. Remember that 100% participation is desired, however, it is not a requirement for the program to work. Your first goal is to obtain at least 50% participation from the residents within your Neighborhood Watch boundaries. Usual boundaries include the immediate street in which you reside; however, you are free to choose your own program boundary. Requiring participation is how residents get to know who lives on their street. Often this is difficult to achieve if your area is too large. Most successful large groups start out on one block and then assist in setting up Neighborhood Watch programs on surrounding blocks. Each street should have a captain who hosts meetings for their block, but who also attends monthly meetings with other area captains within the Neighborhood Watch.

Next, talk with your neighbors. Their participation is crucial to the success of your program.

1. Introduce yourself if you do not know a neighbor.
2. Ask if they have interest in becoming involved in a Neighborhood Watch Program.
3. Discuss neighborhood concerns.
4. Describe the benefits of Neighborhood Watch Programs.
5. Let them know that Neighborhood Watch Programs do not require frequent meetings or personal risk.
6. Ask for their support and participation.

Once you have decided to proceed with starting a Neighborhood Watch Program, call the Crime Prevention Unit of the Gilbert Police Department at (480)503-6527 to schedule your first meeting. At this meeting, you **MUST** have a police department representative in attendance. To ensure this, please set-up a mutually acceptable meeting date/time at least one month prior to notifying neighbors.

*Please note that people often think that their neighbors will be available on weekends. Past experience has shown us that weekend meetings result in poor attendance. The best nights for Neighborhood Watch meetings are Tuesdays and Thursdays. Weekends are good days to hold annual renewal events, but not to hold initial Neighborhood Watch Meetings.

Ideally, the meeting should be held somewhere within the neighborhood. This makes it convenient for everyone to attend and makes your efforts visible within the community. Meetings can be held in someone's home, a neighborhood school, local park, churches, etc.

Once all of the logistics have been set, distribute an invitation or flyer. An example of a Block Watch flyer is included in this manual. This flyer can be copied for your convenience. If you create your own flyer, please send a copy to the Gilbert Police Department Crime Prevention Unit by faxing it to:

(480) 635-7596, or mailing it to the Gilbert Police Department c/o Crime Prevention Unit 75 E. Civic Center Dr., Gilbert, Arizona 85296. Remember that when delivering flyers to neighbors, personal contact seems to improve attendance at meetings.

What is expected of a Neighborhood Watch Captain at the first meeting?

Meetings can be informal or they can be planned affairs including BBQs, potlucks, etc. Keep in mind that the initial presentation given by the Police Department representative generally takes forty-five to ninety minutes, depending on the concerns of the group. This usually does not allow for other speakers to participate in the same meeting. A few tips for having a successful meeting include:

1. Have a sign-in sheet ready so that people can sign-in upon arrival. An original sign-in sheet can be found in this manual and should be copied for your use. (NO scraps of paper will be accepted) Please have individual families sign-in each time.
2. Name tags are a good icebreaker if participants do not know each other.
3. Having a small table is helpful so that your Police Department representative can have handout materials available for your neighbors.
4. Have chairs for everyone. If you do not have enough, you should include in your invitation that everyone should bring their own.
5. Please make participants aware that alcohol is not permitted at Neighborhood Watch meetings.

When it's time to begin, the Neighborhood Watch Captain should make opening remarks and then allow the Police Department representative to take over.

The Police Department representative will facilitate a discussion with the participants as to what brought them together. They will address their concerns about the future of their neighborhood and how a Neighborhood Watch can help. Points that will be discussed during this meeting include:

1. The importance of communication within the neighborhood as well as with the Police Department.
2. When to call the Police and how to provide information to better assist them in resolving issues.
3. Strategies to better secure your home.
4. Information on the importance of displaying that you are an organized Neighborhood Watch group and how to obtain and renew signage for your neighborhood.
5. What services and programs are available to you from the Gilbert Police Department?

After a Q&A session, the Police Department will again introduce the Block Watch Captain. This is a good opportunity for the captain to:

1. Thank everyone for coming.
2. Discuss development of a neighborhood map and telephone tree.
3. Invite people to stay and enjoy refreshments (if available).
4. Discuss the future plans of your Neighborhood Watch group and ask for volunteers (Co-Captains) to assist in planning and implementing said plans.

What do we do with the Sign-In sheets?

The sign-in sheets are used to track the activity of the Neighborhood Watch Programs in the town. This helps ensure that all Captains have held at least one meeting per year. An original sign-in sheet form can be found in this manual for you to copy. At each meeting, the top portion must be completed in full by the Block Watch Captain. Please have one person per household PRINT their information on the form – in their own handwriting. We ask that after EVERY meeting, you fax this sign-in sheet to the Crime Prevention Unit at (480) 635-7596 or mail these sheets to:

GILBERT POLICE DEPARTMENT
c/o Crime Prevention Unit
75 E. Civic Center Dr.
Gilbert, Arizona 85296

Once these sheets are returned they are stored in a binder and used for future police reference.

How do we get our neighborhood signs?

Neighborhood Watch signs are an important way to display to all that your neighborhood is organized, does not tolerate criminal activity, and has taken steps to help secure property and personal safety.

Signs help reduce crime. However, having a Neighborhood Watch sign without implementing security measures proves ineffective. It will not take long for criminals to see that you have signs, but no program to back it up (especially if they live in your neighborhood). Signs without active Neighborhood Watch groups can give residents a false sense of security.

There are two ways of placing signage in a neighborhood. One is with decals (stickers) that can be placed in each participant's window. The second is street signage. Both play an equally important role in deterring crime.

Window decals will be available to individuals who attend the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting. Surplus decals will be left with the Block Watch Captain for those individuals who are participating, but were unable to attend the initial meeting. Street signs must be ordered through the Crime Prevention Unit. Arrangements for placement will also be made at the initial meeting.

Neighborhood Watch Street Signs.

The Town of Gilbert is working to provide Neighborhood Watch Groups with street signs to help designate their neighborhood as a participant in the Neighborhood Watch Program. The following guidelines have been instituted for this program:

1. An Application for a Neighborhood Watch Sign must be completed in entirety. A copy of the form can be found in the Appendix of this Manual. An attachment regarding the signage location will also be attached to this Application by a Gilbert Police Department representative at the initial meeting. A maximum of two signs can be allocated to each Block Watch Community.

The Gilbert Police Department Crime Prevention Unit should be called to request any type of signage maintenance. No fees to maintain your neighborhood signs will be assessed by the Town of Gilbert.



How do I renew our signage privileges?

To renew the signage for your Block Watch program, the Gilbert Police Department has set-up a sticker renewal program. This program will enable your neighborhood to renew your Neighborhood Watch signs annually. To obtain your renewal stickers, you must comply with the following guidelines:

1. An annual meeting must be held to renew your Block Watch status and signage.
2. At least 50% of your designated program area must be in attendance at this annual meeting. You must fax or mail your sign-in sheet to the Gilbert Police Department Crime Prevention Unit to verify attendance.

When the above requirements are completed, you will receive renewal stickers. They should be placed at the bottom, left corner of your neighborhood Block Watch signs. These decals will display your active participation in the program. Neighborhood Watch Groups that do not hold annual events and renew their Neighborhood Block Watch signage are subject to sign removal.

WHAT NOW?

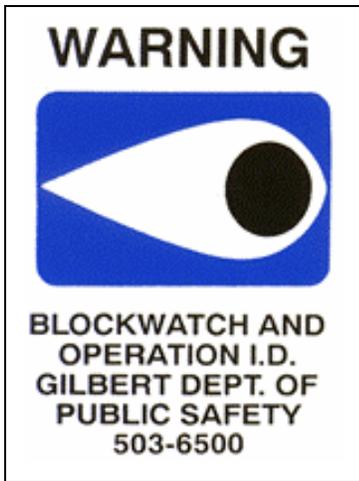
The first meeting with your Neighborhood is only the beginning. Meeting on a regular basis allows participants to become better acquainted with each other and promotes communication. The key to keeping a Neighborhood Watch group active is maintaining interest. By getting everyone involved, you will create a feeling of pride and safety that leads to a more cohesive neighborhood.

Make belonging to your Neighborhood Watch Group enjoyable. Remember that people will most likely become involved if the programs are fun and meaningful. Use your imagination. Here are some ideas to promote ongoing communication between neighbors:

1. Once you have sent in your paperwork, you will receive a quarterly Crime Prevention Newsletter. Feel free to use this information to create your own newsletter or distribute ours to your Neighborhood Watch members. The information is for you to use.
2. Working parties. If residents have similar projects such as painting, landscaping, etc., they are accomplished more efficiently when a group performs the tasks together.
3. Holiday activities. Decorate your homes, have a Halloween contest, an Easter egg hunt or a 4th of July street party. These are examples of a few simple activities that will help maintain good relations between neighbors.
4. Car-pooling. Share a ride to work, to shopping centers, or to grocery stores when possible.
5. Neighborhood Yard Sales. Neighborhood yard sales attract a large amount of customers and are a good way to clean out your home or garage.
6. Neighborhood Parents. Develop a “neighborhood parent system”. Identify homes where children can go if they need assistance when their parents are not at home.
7. Telephone visits. Schedule to check on your elderly neighbors. Ensure that they are feeling well and not in need of any assistance. Be a good neighbor.

How do I Reach the Gilbert Police Department?

**The Gilbert Police Department
Crime Prevention Unit
75 E. Civic Center Dr.
Gilbert, Arizona 85296
Phone: (480) 503-6527
Police website and email at www.gilbertaz.gov**



Got a Minute?

If you are concerned as I am about our neighborhood, I would like to invite you to a meeting that will be held at:

On: _____

From: _____ p.m.

A member of the Gilbert Police Department will be there to discuss ways to deal with our concerns. The program is called Neighborhood Watch. The Police Department will discuss inexpensive ways to improve home security and how to build a neighborhood alliance to make our neighborhood a safer place.

Please plan to attend this meeting as 50% participation of our community is required to complete our activation and obtain street signage. If you have any questions about this meeting, you may contact the Gilbert Police Department, Crime Prevention Unit at (480)503-6527 or me (your neighbor) at _____.

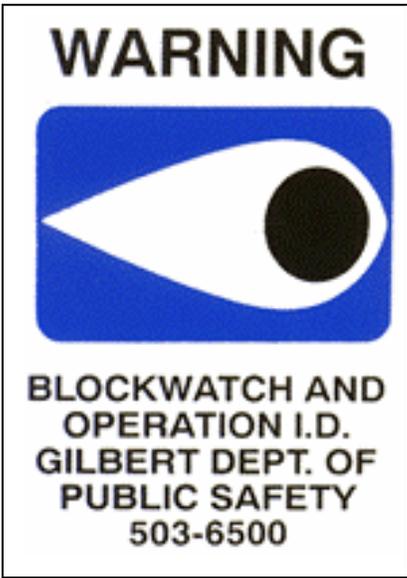
Thank you.

Neighborhood Watch Sign Request

Please send this form by facsimile transmittal and/or by mailing this sheet to:

**Gilbert Police Department
Crime Prevention Unit
75 East Civic Center Drive
Gilbert, Arizona 85296
Fax No.: (480)635-7596**

Neighborhood Watch Captain:



Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ **Work Phone:** _____

Total number of signs requested: 2 **date:** _____

Please draw a diagram of streets and proposed sign locations