

SIMI VALLEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Crime Prevention Unit – Neighborhood Watch



Burglary is a crime of opportunity committed by criminals who capitalize on carelessness or neglect. Most home burglaries are not committed by professionals who have planned to commit a burglary. Most are committed by amateurs who find an open or unlocked door or window, or drug abusers who take advantage of a home's weak defenses.

To combat the increase in crime in today's society, the police need the eyes and ears of citizens like you. To help the police protect your property from criminals you must get involved. To help you help yourself, your community, and the Simi Valley Police Department, the Neighborhood Watch Program was established.

No home can be protected like Fort Knox. All of the locks, bars, lights, and alarms cannot guarantee total protection. You cannot make your home, property, and self crime proof, but you can make them crime resistant.

The Simi Valley Police Department would like you to start or join a Neighborhood Watch, and learn what you can do to reduce your chances of becoming a crime victim. A Neighborhood Watch is easy to start and effective when implemented. By starting a Neighborhood Watch in your area, you are taking the first step toward making your home, your neighborhood, and your community a safer place to live.

What is it?

The City of Simi Valley's Neighborhood Watch program is the cornerstone of all crime prevention programs. It enlists the active participation of citizens in cooperation with the Simi Valley Police Department to reduce burglaries and other neighborhood crimes. Its primary purpose is the protection of property – yours and your neighbors.

Most home burglaries occur during the day and early evening hours, when alert neighbors could spot the thieves and call police. Concerned citizens are doing just that. They are part of a Neighborhood Watch Program – neighbors looking out for neighbors.

Neighborhood Watch crime prevention programs are a proven and effective means to substantially reduce not only the incidence of residential burglaries in a specific geographical area, but also the incidence of other crimes as well.

"A good neighbor is one of the most effective crime prevention tools ever invented."

Neighborhood Watch teaches you the steps that you can take to help protect your home. It also organizes a neighborhood group that can make crime prevention part of every person's daily routine, just by watching out for each other. Your job is to report suspicious activity to police. It is their job to handle the crooks!

The Simi Valley Police Department continues to actively support the Neighborhood Watch Program. It is one vehicle by which we hope to conduct a sustained attack on crime through innovative crime prevention techniques.

It involves:

Neighbors getting to know each other and working in a program of mutual assistance. Start or join a Neighborhood Watch Program.

Citizens being trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhoods become a Neighborhood Watcher. If you see a crime or suspicious activity in your neighborhood, immediately report what you have seen to the police.

Implementation of crime prevention techniques, such as home security, Operation Identification, and others, utilize crime prevention measures to make it much more difficult for criminals to perpetrate a crime in your community and at your home.

How to Start a Neighborhood Watch Program

First, Get Organized

The first step in starting a Neighborhood Watch is to contact the Crime Prevention Unit and request a starter packet. The packet will contain materials that will assist you in conducting your first meeting. You may contact the Crime Prevention Unit by phone at (805) 583-6950.

Talk to Your Neighbors

Determine the geographic area of your Neighborhood Watch. It should include only the homes on your street. It may include a cul de sac in the middle of your block, but it cannot include the streets on either side of yours. We also do not recommend more than 25 to 30 homes in any one Neighborhood Watch.

Canvass your neighborhood for interest. Discuss crime problems in your area and how neighbors working together can help to prevent crime. Be sure to mention that:

- Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings.
- It does not ask that anyone take any personal risks to prevent crime.
- Neighborhood Watch leaves the responsibility for apprehension of criminals where it belongs – with the police.

If your neighborhood is interested in the Neighborhood Watch Program you will need to schedule a date and time with the Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit for your first meeting. An officer from the Unit will attend your first meeting. Plan the meeting far enough in advance to give everyone adequate notice. The meeting should be informal and comfortable. If possible, hold it in your home or a neighbor's home.

Distribute flyers announcing the meeting and its location. As the meeting date approaches (two or three days before), remind people of the meeting. Do not be disappointed if everyone

cannot attend. One hundred percent participation is desired, but is not a requirement for the program to work.

The first Neighborhood Watch meeting is considered a working/organizational meeting. For this reason, we ask that no small children attend. Later meetings can be designed to focus on children, if the neighborhood desires.

The First Meeting:

- Prepare and distribute nametags.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting.
- Have everyone sign the member information form that was in the packet given to you at the information meeting.
- Introduce the Police Department's Crime Prevention Specialist.

The Officer will explain and discuss:

- The Neighborhood Watch Program
- The City's involvement in the program.
- Information about specific crime problems in your area
- Effective crime prevention techniques for home and neighborhood safety
- How to report a crime
- The need for neighborhood involvement in crime prevention and what it can accomplish
- Other crime prevention programs

Once your Neighborhood Watch is established, be sure that everyone understands and observes the following guidelines:

- Be suspicious. Report any unusual or suspicious behavior to the police. Write down descriptions of the person(s) and license number of any vehicle(s).
- Keep a trusted neighbor informed if your house will be unoccupied for an extended period. It is important to leave that neighbor a way of reaching you if an emergency should arise.
- Look after your neighbor's house when they are away, and ask them to look after yours. This includes collecting mail, newspapers, and other deliveries which would indicate at a glance that no one is home.
- Above all, be concerned. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe. Often times, spending a few extra seconds watching strangers walking, or driving through your neighborhood is enough to prevent many crimes.
- And remember: Your job is to report crime. The responsibility for apprehending criminals belongs to the police.