

Neighborhood Watch Program



Courtesy of the Holmes Beach Police Department

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Chief of Police

Neighborhood Watch Program

A program involving the joint efforts of the Holmes Beach Police Department and the community designed to enhance neighborhood security, heighten the community's power of observation, and to encourage mutual assistance and concern among neighbors.

In recent years, neighborhoods have experienced rapid change. The old established neighborhood has been replaced by a highly transient, growing community where people seek more and more privacy. This lifestyle tends to promote unfamiliarity with neighbors and a corresponding lack of concern. Unfortunately, this enhances the opportunities for the criminal element and increases the community's vulnerability to crime.

It has been shown in communities where there is a strong bond between neighbors that the crime rate can be reduced by as much as 56%. **Your participation is vital for the success of this program.**

The main objective of the Neighborhood Watch Program is to reduce the incidence of crime by:

1. Increasing citizens awareness of burglary and other neighborhood crime through a continuing information program.
2. Training citizens in the means to better property security and assisting them in making their property more secure.
3. Developing a neighborhood action program where neighbors help watch each other's property and report suspicious persons and activities to law enforcement agencies.
4. Encouraging all citizens to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in reporting crime.
5. Encourage each resident to participate in Operation Identification

Duties and Responsibilities

Leader:

1. Be the first one notified AFTER the police department when suspicious activity is noted by a watch member.
2. Start your own phone chain.

Watch Members:

1. Act as eyes for your neighbors and report any suspicious activity.
2. Study crime prevention materials furnished to them.
3. Check neighbors' homes when out of town.
4. Cooperate with and help the leader.
5. Secure your home in compliance with the recommendations in the residential security training sessions.
6. Participate in Operation Identification.

Materials:

1. Roster of the participating neighbors in the program. This roster includes the name, address and phone numbers of all members in the group.
2. Phone chain of the members in the group.

What is Suspicious?

The Holmes Beach Police Department cannot function effectively without the concerned assistance of responsible citizens. They are depending on you to call and report all suspicious persons or activity.

Some people fail to call simply because they are not aware of what seemingly innocent activities might be suspicious. Others may notice suspicious activity and be hesitant to call for fear of seeming a "nosy neighbor" or a "crank". Still others take it for granted that someone else has or will call.

Call the Holmes Beach Police Department immediately about all suspicious activity. DO NOT worry about "bothering" the police. The officers are there to help all residents. DO NOT WORRY about being embarrassed if your suspicions prove unfounded. **THINK INSTEAD ABOUT WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU DO NOT ACT.**

Information to Provide to the Police

WHAT HAPPENED? WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? WHERE DID IT HAPPEN? WAS ANYONE HURT?

Description of persons:

When describing suspects, notice age, race, sex, height, and weight. Compare your own height and weight with the suspects. Pick out some unique characteristics such as scars, nose, jewelry, tattoos, etc. that will help you identify the suspect in the future if need be.

Description of vehicle:

License number, make, model, color and noticeable damage. Direction of travel.

Obvious Things to Look For

Basically, anything that seems even slightly out of place or that is occurring at an unusual time of day could be criminal activity. Some of the most obvious things to watch for and report to the police are:

A stranger entering your neighbor's house when it is unoccupied may be a burglar.

A scream heard anywhere may mean a robbery or assault.

Offers of merchandise at ridiculously low prices could mean stolen property.

Anyone removing accessories, license plates, or gas from a car should be reported.

Anyone seen going from car to car trying to open car doors.

Anyone peering into parked cars may be looking for a car to steal or for valuables left displayed the car.

Persons entering or leaving a place of business after hours could mean burglars.

A sound of breaking glass or loud explosive noises could mean an accident, burglary, or vandalism.

Persons around the neighborhood who do not live there could be burglars.

Not So Obvious Things to Look For

Not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal by any means. There many perfectly legitimate repairmen and servicemen moving around our neighborhoods all the time. But criminals **DO** take advantage of this by assuming the guise of a legitimate business representative. **After all, if a criminal looked like a criminal, no one would have any trouble spotting them.**

Check all identification of meter readers, repairmen, etc. prior to allowing them in your home. If you did not call them to your house, call their company and verify they are legitimate.

Be suspicious of any alleged deliveryman with a wrong address or asking if someone else lives there. Some of the not so obvious things to watch for are:

One or more juveniles walking casually through the neighborhood looking into automobiles, or backyard, etc.

Anyone forcing entrance to, or tampering with a residence, business or vehicle.

A person running, especially carrying something of value.

Kids walking around your neighborhood during school hours and or late at night could be truants, looking for open vehicles or about to commit a crime.

Someone carrying property. If it's at an unusual hour or in an unusual place, or if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.

A person exhibiting unusual mental or physical symptoms: may be injured, under the influence otherwise needing medical or psychiatric assistance.

Human traffic to and from a certain residence is not suspicious unless it occurs on a daily basis or very regular basis. It could possibly be the scene of vice activities or a fence operation.

Any vehicle moving slowly and without lights or following a course that appears aimless or repetitive in any location: but particularly so in areas of schools, parks, or playgrounds. The occupants may be looking for places to rob or to burglarize, or they could be drug pushers or sex offenders.

Parked occupied vehicles containing one or more persons: If it is an unusual hour, they could be possible lookouts for a burglary in progress, even if the occupants appear to be legitimate.

Vehicles being loaded with valuables if parked in front of a closed business or unattended residence even if the vehicle is a legitimate looking commercial vehicle. More and more professional thieves are taking the time and trouble to customize their vehicles with special signs in order to move more freely without suspicion.

Apparent business transactions conducted from a vehicle. Especially around schools or parks. If juveniles are involved, it could mean a possible drug sale.

Persons being forced into vehicles. Especially if juveniles or females, may mean a possible kidnapping.

An abandoned vehicle parked on your block may be a stolen car.

Continuous repair operations at a non-business location could mean stolen property is being stripped, repainted, or otherwise altered.

Open or broken doors or windows at a closed business or residence whose owners are absent could mean a burglary in progress or already completed.

A beam of flashlight in a neighbor's home especially if they are away.

Persons wearing or carrying bloody clothing could be a suspect or victim of a serious crime.

Persons making a quick change of vehicles may be attempting to elude the police or abandoning a stolen vehicle.

While some, if not all, of the suspicious situations described could have innocent explanations, police officers would rather investigate a crime-prone situation than be called when it is too late. **Your call could save a life, prevent an injury or stop a criminal act.**

Describing a Suspect



Suspect

Weapon?

Race

Gender

Age

Height

Weight

Hair

Eyes

Complexion

Scars, marks, tattoos, physical defects

Hat

Shirt

Pants

Shoes

Socks

Vehicle Description

Make

Model

License #

Color

Direction travel

Year

Dents/marks

Suspect Identification Assistant

GENDER: MALE FEMALE

RACE: ASIAN BLACK HISPANIC WHITE Other: _____

HAIR STYLE CURLY STRAIGHT BALD DREADLOCKS BRAIDED

HAIR COLOR: BLACK BLOND BROWN GREY RED

HAIR LENGTH: LONG MEDIUM SHORT

HEIGHT: _____ **WEIGHT:** _____

BUILD: HEAVY V.HEAVY MEDIUM THIN V.THIN

SCARS: WHERE: _____ DESCRIPTION: _____

TATTOOS: WHERE: _____ DESCRIPTION: _____

BIRTH MARKS: WHERE: _____ DESCRIPTION: _____

CLOTHING:

HAT: BALLCAP RIMMED STOCKING Other: _____

SHIRT: SPORTS T-SHIRT TANK TOP Other: _____

SLEEVES: SHORT LONG NONE Other: _____

COLOR OF SHIRT: _____

PANTS: SHORTS LONG MID-LENGTH Other: _____

JACKET: LONG SHORT HOODY Other: _____

SHOES: _____

JEWELRY: BRACELET EARRINGS NECKLACE RINGS WATCH

DESCRIPTION: _____

FACIAL HAIR: BEARD MUSTACHE GOATEE

CHIN: _____

EARS: _____

EYES: _____

NOSE: _____

COMPLEXION: DARK MEDIUM LIGHT FRECKLES ACNE

EYE COLOR: BLACK BLUE BROWN GREEN GREY
 HAZEL

EYE BROWS: BUSHY V.BUSHY MEDIUM THIN V. THIN
 DESIGN CUT INTO BROW _____

SPEECH: SLOW MEDIUM FAST LISP
 CRISP SLURRED Voice _____

ACCENT: TYPE: _____

VEHICLE DESCRIPTION

COLOR: _____ **YEAR:** _____ **Make:** _____

MODEL: _____ **Damage:** _____

DIRECTION OF TRAVEL: _____ **Bumper Sticker:** _____

WEAPON: HELD WITH WHICH HAND LEFT RIGHT

TYPE OF WEAPON: RIFLE/SHOTGUN FULL LENGTH SAWED OFF

ASSAULT RIFLE

HANDGUN: REVOLVER SEMI- AUTOMATIC LARGE SMALL

KNIFE: FOLDING HUNTING LARGE SMALL



Semi-automatic rifles



Sawed off pump shotgun



Revolver



Snub nose Revolver



Revolver



Semi-automatic pistol



Pocket Knife



Bayonet Knife



Butterfly Knife



“WHOM TO CALL WHEN....”

...you observe an *abandoned vehicle* parked on private property that has no tag or expired tag or other code violation

...you observe a residence with trash, refrigerator with a door attached

Code Enforcement (941) 708-5800 X247

...you notice a city *street light* that is dim or out

...you feel a street light is needed in a dark area

...you see *trees* that need to be trimmed around street lights or power lines

...your visibility is diminished due to *bushes/shrubs* too close to street or corner

...there is *trash* on the street or if you plan on having a major

...clean-up in your neighborhood and need a dumpster

...streets need to be repaired or *potholes* are present

Public Works 708-5800 X232

...a *stop sign* is missing

Police Dept (941) 708-COPS

Holmes Beach Police
www.holmesbeachfl.org
(941) 708-COPS (2677)

Chief Tokajer
(941) 708-5804 X 239 Chief@holmesbeach.org

Sgt. Vern McGowin – Crime Watch Specialist
(941) 708-5804 X304 watch@holmesbeach.org

Records Dept.
(941) 708-5804 X248 records@holmesbeach.org

FREQUENTLY USED WEBSITES AND PHONE NUMBERS

FPL power outage number: 1(800)468-8243

Federal Do not call list: (888)382-1222 website is www.donotcall.gov

State do not call list: 1-800-435-7352 www.800helpfla.com cost: free

Federal Trade Commission: (877)382-4357 or www.ftc.gov

National Fraud Information Center: (800)876-7060

Manatee County Seniors vs Crime 727-5200 or www.seniorvscime.com

Florida Dept of Agriculture, Consumer Services: (800)435-7352

assist you in determining the percentage of actual funds going to a charity's program

website is www.800helpfla.com

Determine if the email you have seen or received is accurate or false www.snopes.com

Sexual offender database: www.fdle.state.fl.us then click on sexual offender database link

Looks too good to be true: scam research website www.lookstoogoodtobetrue.com/index.aspx

Florida State Statute with Regard to Neighborhood Watch

Be aware that laws are in place to help protect citizens participating in a Neighborhood Watch.

843.20 Harassment of participant of neighborhood crime watch program prohibited; penalty; definitions.--

(1) It shall be a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. [775.082](#) or s. [775.083](#), for any person to willfully harass, threaten, or intimidate an identifiable member of a neighborhood crime watch program while such member is engaged in, or traveling to or from, an organized neighborhood crime watch program activity or a member who is participating in an ongoing criminal investigation, as designated by a law enforcement officer.

(2) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Harass" means to engage in a course of conduct directed at a specific person which causes substantial emotional distress in that person and serves no legitimate purpose.

(b) "Organized neighborhood crime watch program activity" means any prearranged event, meeting, or other scheduled activity, or neighborhood patrol, conducted by or at the direction of a neighborhood crime watch program or the program's authorized designee.

PHONE CHAIN PROTOCOL

If there is a suspicious person or activity going on that you (or a neighbor who is not in the watch) have witnessed the following is what you should do:

**Call 911 if crime in progress or
(941) 778-COPS (2677) if suspicious person/incident**

Allow the officer to direct the call. He/she will be able to dispatch an officer to the area quicker, if you allow the dispatcher to ask you the necessary questions. Be prepared with the following information:

Type of Crime or suspicious event

Is it a crime in progress or when did it occur, if recent

Where is the crime in progress?

Description of the suspect

Race, age, sex, height/weight (compare to yours), hair, eyes, complexion, scars, marks,
tattoos, dress, physical defects

Direction of travel

Was the suspect armed!!!!

Vehicle, if used.

Make, model, direction of travel, year, color, dents/marks, how long ago seen?

License number (** the last 3 digits are the most important)

After you are told to hang up by the officer, **CALL YOUR LEADER** (or backup leader if your leader is not available). If neither is available, you become the leader for this phone chain alert. You will then put yourself in the position of the leader on the phone chain and begin to call your neighbors. You need to contact your leader on **EVERY** call the goes into the HBPD even if you find a crime has been committed many hours later.

Keep your phone chain near the phone, along with a piece of paper and pen. Remember the first person you are to contact is the POLICE then the next one is your leader. It is suggested that you start the conversation with each person you call, as something like this:

“This is (your name) with the neighborhood watch. There has been an incident in the neighborhood and I am calling you to begin the phone chain.”

This message will be clear to the person that you call that this is not a social call and alert them to be prepared to write down information and get their phone chain ready.

If you call someone and their voicemail picks up, **DO NOT LEAVE A VOICE MESSAGE ON AN ANSWERING MACHINE OR VOICEMAIL WITH THE ALERT INFORMATION.** This will only slow down the chain, and if they are not answering, they are not home to watch anyway. Then contact the person or persons that they were responsible for calling.

If one or both of your people are not home, (don't take time to leave a phone message), you are then responsible for calling their people. You need to keep calling until someone takes over the chain so that the chain is not broken. Remember time is of the essence. Most suspects will be traveling fast.

If you are the one initiate the 911 call, but are at the end of the phone chain, with no one that you are responsible for calling, remember, you are still responsible for notifying your leader!

Then go to the window and look for the suspect. This is in case the suspect doubles back or moves in another direction. If you notice them going in a direction not initially stated, call the POLICE and state the following:

“I know that you have been contacted about a suspect on _____ Street. I just saw them going in this direction” This will assist the police to catch them no matter what the suspect tries. You always stay inside your home during an alert. **There is no patrolling in the neighborhood watch program. You do not confront anyone.** The police officers are responsible for contacting the individuals you are calling in.

If you confront anyone, you will be re-trained. If you do not follow the protocol and continue to confront, you will be removed from the Neighborhood Watch Program. Confronting puts you in potential danger and therefore, is not allowed as part of the program.

