

**ALTAMONTE SPRINGS  
POLICE DEPARTMENT**



**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH  
CRIME PREVENTION  
HANDBOOK**

**Compiled for  
Neighborhood Coordinators  
and  
Block Captains**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHY DO WE NEED NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH? .....	1 (2/94)
WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH? .....	2 (2/94)
OPPORTUNITY .....	4 (2/94)
GOAL .....	5 (2/94)
OBJECTIVES OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH .....	5 (2/94)
DUTIES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH COORDINATOR .....	6 (2/94)
DUTIES OF THE BLOCK CAPTAIN .....	7 (2/94)
BLOCK MEMBERS DUTIES .....	8 (2/94)
MUCH VALUE, LITTLE TIME .....	8 (2/94)
HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH .....	9 (2/94)
SETTING UP THE INITIAL MEETING .....	10 (2/94)
INITIAL MEETING: .....	10 (2/94)
PROGRAM FOR THE INITIAL MEETING: .....	10 (2/94)
AGENDA: .....	11 (2/94)
KEEPING YOUR PROGRAM ACTIVE .....	12 (2/94)
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER .....	13 (2/94)
NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH SIGNS .....	15 (2/94)
CHECK YOUR SIGN FOR ORANGE .....	15 (2/94)
THE WATCH TELEPHONE CHAIN .....	16 (2/94)
YOUR PART IN THE CHAIN: .....	16 (2/94)
THE TELEPHONE CHAIN FORM .....	17 (2/94)

SENIOR CITIZENS BE AWARE .....	30 (2/94)
BANK EXAMINER: .....	30 (2/94)
PIGEON DROP:	
.....	30 (2/94)
HOME IMPROVEMENT:	
.....	31 (2/94)
DOOR-TO-DOOR SOLICITOR:	
.....	31 (2/94)
STREET CRIMES: .....	32 (2/94)
OBSCENE PHONE CALLS .....	35 (2/94)
AUTO THEFT .....	34 (2/94)
BASIC TIPS: .....	34 (2/94)
HOME SECURITY SURVEYS .....	35 (2/94)
COMMUNITY RESOURCES .....	36 (2/94)
VIDEO PRESENTATIONS .....	37 (2/94)
IF YOU CALL, WE WILL COME! .....	38 (2/94)
IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS .....	39 (2/94)
ALTAMONTE SPRINGS CITY COMMISSIONERS .....	40 (2/94)
GOVERNMENT NUMBERS .....	41 (2/94)
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	42 (2/94)

## WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?

Very few people are in the position to protect their homes and property 100% of the time. Vacation trips, business trips, work, shopping or even an evening out will leave our homes unattended and vulnerable to burglary.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH is a program of mutual assistance among neighbors aimed at reducing crime in our communities at the grass roots level. Get to know your neighbors, introduce them to the concept of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH. Get involved. A neighborhood where people are alert to the potential of crime and willing to look out for one another's interests is a neighborhood where crimes are least likely to occur.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH is an invitation to you to be a good neighbor. If a neighbor is away and you notice an obvious oversight in his home security that might attract a burglar, correct it. Close that open garage door; pick up his mail or paper for him and hold them for his return; keep his yard in good condition; and be alert for suspicious people around his property. Good neighbors working together through NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH can prevent crimes in their area the most effective way -- before it starts.

The NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program establishes a formal network for concerned citizens to communicate with other neighbors and police regarding crime related problems. Simply translated -- NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH asks the concerned citizen to become the eyes and ears of the police department, to be more involved with their neighbors and their property by becoming more aware and alert to the activity on their block. As citizens go about their daily routine, they have the opportunity to casually observe the neighborhood. Such observations may be useful in keeping children away from vacant houses, reporting suspicious vehicles, or alerting police and neighbors to suspicious people in the area. It is important to realize that criminals find it difficult to operate in areas where citizens take an active role in preventing crime.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH does not include any suggestions for ill-considered physical resistance to threats of force or violence, nor is it an invitation to vigilante groups to operate outside the law. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH is promoting teamwork between the Altamonte Springs Police Department and the community in its attempt to reduce residential crimes in our community.

The real key to this program is getting to know your neighbors and sharing with them the responsibility of protecting your neighborhood. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH consists of three basic steps:

Securing your home; Marking and taking inventory of your valuables; and reporting suspicious and criminal activity to law enforcement. As a member of the team, you act as the "eyes and ears" of law enforcement.

## GOAL

The Altamonte Springs Police Department is dedicated to reducing residential crime throughout the city. Building a better understanding between the public and law enforcement is essential. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH provides the basis of a partnership necessary to deter crime and provide a sense of security to the residents of our City.

## OBJECTIVES OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

- ★ Maintain a co-operative system of surveillance
- ★ Report suspicious activities or crimes in progress to the police
- ★ Implement good home security practices
- ★ Circulate educational materials relative to crime prevention
- ★ Assist victims of crime
- ★ Provide an effective communication network between the community and the police
- ★ Encourage community awareness and involvement in crime prevention initiatives

## DUTIES OF THE BLOCK CAPTAIN

The Block Captains have one of the most important functions in the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program, uniting the citizen participants who join in their communities. The Block Captain is responsible for one segment of the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH territory.

The Block Captain should:

Encourage neighborhood participation in the program.

Disseminate information channelled from the Neighborhood Coordinator and/or the Altamonte Springs Police Department to the neighbors in their watch area regarding crime prevention.

Compile a list of names of all persons in their section who wish to participate in the program, as well as their addresses and both home and work phone numbers.

Assist the Neighborhood Coordinator with the neighborhood meetings.

Serve as liaison between the community and the Altamonte Springs Police Department.

Attend NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH training sessions.

Inform block members of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH techniques such as how to observe and report suspicious activities/persons.

Provide incentive for block members to continue their crime prevention efforts.

Welcome new neighbors to your community and encourage their joining NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH.

Assist in the formation and maintenance of the emergency telephone notification system.

Relay information on community problems/suspicious activity to the police department.

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

The need for neighbors to look out for each other is the basis of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH. This program encourages and educates residents on how to act as the eyes and ears of the police department.

The Altamonte Springs Police Department has a Crime Prevention Team available to assist any neighborhood with establishing and maintaining an active NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program.

First contact with your neighbors should be friendly, positive and emphasis cooperation among neighbors for the good of the community.

- ★ Organize around the positive. Emphasize the social and positive aspects of an organized neighborhood. Stress community pride, the safety of children, senior, homes and residents. Emphasize the possibility of increasing community services and enjoying block parties and socializing with neighbors.
- ★ Personalize involvement. Stress that residents personally can make their neighborhood a more enjoyable and better place to live. Recognize that citizens like to help their neighbors and enjoy being part of community events.
- ★ Emphasize success. Citizens are sometimes puzzled that organized neighborhoods can be effective against crime and social problems. Give examples of how NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH has benefited your community.
- ★ Don't emphasize fear. Fear decreases participation.
- ★ Develop a sense of local solidarity. Publish a regular newsletter just for your neighborhood.
- ★ Stress community issues. Emphasize neighborhood problems that concern citizens. Show that by working together as a team the problems can be solved or reduced.
- ★ Keep programs convenient and in the neighborhood. Don't expect people to travel outside their neighborhood. Survey residents to establish the best times and places for meetings and activities.
- ★ Stress low costs of fighting crime. Share ways to secure homes and property for minimal costs.
- ★ Teach residents how to report crimes. Citizens who know how and what to report can provide more useful information to the police.

## AGENDA:

1. Host/Chairperson welcomes attendees and has everyone introduce themselves stating their name and address.
2. Introduction of the Crime Prevention Team.
3. Neighborhood statistics will be discussed; how many calls we have had in the area in the past 12 months; types of calls; specific problems the police department has become aware of.
4. Introduction to the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program. How it works, why it is needed, how to become and stay involved, goals of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH.
5. Introduction of the burglar, what he looks for, how we can take away his opportunity, how to report crimes and suspicious activities/persons, Operation Identification.
6. Other programs offered by the Altamonte Springs Police Department include many topics of interest to the homeowner, apartment dweller, senior citizen, home security surveys, etc.
7. Organizing your NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program for your community. Getting volunteers to be Block Captains, forming an information system, preparing a community map, job descriptions and expectations.
8. Set a date for your next meeting.



## YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER

Newsletters can be useful tools to keep the citizens motivated to practice crime prevention and to inform of the "happenings" in the area. Your newsletter should remind people of meeting times and places; inform citizens of crime prevention techniques which will enhance their safety; attract new members to your NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program; help prevent apathy in the watch group.

Decide how often your newsletter will be published. Be sure it is distributed regularly, monthly or bi-monthly if possible, but at least quarterly. Then, establish a time line for getting the newsletter done. Set dates for stories to be written, for editing to be finished, for copying and preparing for distribution. Setting up a schedule and sticking to it is vital to the success of your newsletter.

You want your newsletter to look as professional and attractive as possible. The value of a newsletter, however, is its content: that regular reminder to citizens that their efforts in crime prevention are needed. Don't worry about perfection at first. Jump in, get started and worry about refinement later.

The formula for content is a guideline to help you balance your coverage, to keep the publication interesting to all your readers and to give you a starting point for thinking about each issue. The formula is simply a list of types of stories you would like to include each month.

Because the news varies from issue to issue, the formula is only a guide, not a rule. Below are some ideas, which you will want to adapt to the needs of your area. Emphasize aspects of crime prevention that are most applicable to your area.

- One personality feature per issue. Highlight an individual such as a new Block Captain, a police officer or a successful crime watcher.
- Announcement of activities.
- List of specific crimes in the community.
- Feature on one service offered by the City of Altamonte Springs; law enforcement, zoning, code compliance, city commission, city management, recreational activities, etc.
- Meet-your-neighbors column.
- Instructional seasonal tips; holiday shopping, vacation tips, boat safety, etc. Basic crime prevention information and reminders.

## NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH SIGNS

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH signs are available for purchase to any active watch program in the City of Altamonte Springs. It is recommended that one sign be posted at each entrance to your community. The Community Relations Division will order the signs for the area.

### CHECK YOUR SIGN FOR ORANGE

The NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program has a system to alert all residents when crimes occur in their neighborhood. An orange square will be attached to the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH signs at each entrance to your subdivision, by the Coordinator. This will indicate that a crime has been reported in your area. These orange squares will remain in place for several days and then be removed.

If you would like information about the crime, contact your Block Captain or NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH Coordinator. They will have received information about the crime from the police department. The Coordinator informs each Block Captain and the Block Captains inform their Block Members.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH  
"NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS"

THE TELEPHONE CHAIN FORM

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

STREET NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

<b>YOUR HOME</b>
----------------------

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

STREET NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

Name
Address
Home Phone
Bus Phone

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH COORDINATOR \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
BLOCK CAPTAIN \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

11. Be patient. The Communications Specialist is in contact with the responding officers and needs as many details as possible to assist the officers in planning their approach.

12. After calling the police, activate your telephone chain so that neighbors can help watch the suspect and give police a more detailed description.

When you dial 9-1-1 in Altamonte Springs, the telephone company computer automatically directs your call to the Altamonte Springs Police Department. We encourage citizens to report any suspicious activity or person immediately. The Department wants you to become involved in crime prevention through watching and reporting.

When you dial 9-1-1, the address and phone number of your location are automatically displayed on a screen in the telecommunications section. If you need fire or rescue services, 9-1-1 enables the clerk to switch your call immediately.

Due to the swiftness of the 9-1-1 system, units can be dispatched and rolling while you are still speaking with the Communications Specialist. Responding officers are radioed details as they travel to the scene, so it's important for you to give the dispatcher as much information as you can.

Remember, the Altamonte Springs Police Department would much rather respond to a call where they are not needed than not be called. If you feel you need police assistance, dial 9-1-1.

## HOW TO DESCRIBE A VEHICLE

Train yourself to notice the following details about vehicles, so you can report them to your dispatcher.

- ★ Color
- ★ Year
- ★ Make
- ★ Body Type: sedan, two-door, convertible, station wagon
- ★ License Number: specify state
- ★ Other Identification: exterior attachments, damage, etc.
- ★ HINT: CYMBAL = Color, year, make, body and license

**EXAMPLE:** A black, late-model Plymouth, four-door sedan, Florida license number ASPD123, with spotlight on driver's side and a large dent on rear passenger door.

If the vehicle is moving, try to note the direction of travel; what street it is on, what cross street it is approaching; give north, south, east, or west directions.

## INCIDENTS IN PROGRESS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

After you have notified the Altamonte Springs Police Department:

1. Notify the Block Captain as soon as possible so he/she can be sure the telephone chain is activated. A "visual fence" is then set up. At night, aid the police by turning on lights. DO NOT go outside. Police and K-9 units might mistake you for the suspect! Also, remember the suspect might be armed.
2. Block Captains should set up "visual fence", then notify the Neighborhood Coordinator. If necessary, the Coordinator will alert other Block Captains in the immediate vicinity.
3. If the suspect is not apprehended, the Coordinator will notify the Area Coordinator to inform surrounding neighborhoods.

## DISPLAYING YOUR ADDRESS

Help Police, Fire and Medical personnel find your home quickly by posting your address numbers in a visible place that can be clearly seen from the street during the day or at night.

House numbers should be at least three inches tall and a contrasting color with the immediate background material. The numbers should be in Arabic numerals and are best in a reflective finish. Place the numbers near your front door or on the fascia of the house above the front door. House numbers should also be placed at the driveway entrance and on the streetside mailbox.

## OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

You should engrave your Florida driver's license number on your valuables to deter burglars and aid police if your property is stolen. It is hard for a burglar to dispose of permanently marked items so he often won't steal them. **Do NOT** mark your valuables with your Social Security number because regulations make these numbers almost impossible to trace.

When marking your valuables with your driver's license number be sure to include the state prefix at the beginning of the number. If you are not a driver and are over 19 years of age, any Florida Driver's License Issuing Station will issue a Department of Motor Vehicles I.D. card. This card will have the same type of code number for purposes of identification as a driver's license. This number can then be traced back to you in the event that marked stolen property is recovered by the police.

Valuables that cannot be marked such as antiques, silver, chains, coins, etc., should be photographed in detail with a complete description of the article on the back of the photograph.

Make sure you have a written record of all marked valuables and their serial number, make, model and location of your marking. Keep this record in a safe place. You may want to give an additional copy to your insurance agent. Inventory records are available from the Community Relations Division.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR THE TELEPHONE

- ★ Never give personal information (name, age, address, etc.)
- ★ Never let a stranger know you are home alone.
- ★ Instruct a babysitter never to tell anyone who calls that he/she is home alone with the children.
- ★ Teach children old enough to be left alone never to tell a stranger who telephones that their parents are gone. Teach them to say, "My Mom can't come to the phone now. May I take a message?"

## SAFETY TIPS FOR THE CAR

- ★ Whenever possible, park the car in a well-lighted area.
- ★ Always lock your car.
- ★ Have your keys in your hand when leaving home or work.
- ★ Store valuables or packages in the trunk or covered up.
- ★ If working late, try to have a friend or security accompany you to your car.
- ★ As you approach your car, be sure to check the floor of the back seat.
- ★ Whenever driving, keep your doors locked.
- ★ If you think you are being followed, drive to the nearest well-lighted area where there are people and ask for help.
- ★ If you have car trouble on the road, raise the hood and then wait inside the car with the doors locked and the windows up. If a motorist stops to help, crack your window slightly and ask him to call the police.
- ★ **DON'T** pick up a hitchhiker under **any** circumstances.
- ★ Don't pull over for flashing headlights. If it is an emergency vehicle or the police, there will be flashing red or blue lights on top of the car.

## IF CONFRONTED

If you are confronted by an intruder or assailant, remember **NOTHING** is more important than your safety.

1. Remain calm and do exactly as the robber instructs.
2. Do not attempt to stall or hold back money.
3. Do not speak unless spoken to.
4. Do not make any sudden moves. Tell the intruder every move you are going to make before making it.
5. Do not attempt to apprehend the person yourself.
6. Dial 9-1-1 and report the crime immediately. Then write down every detail you can recall, leaving nothing out. Do not discuss the incident with other witnesses.



## SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR APARTMENTS

### THE BUILDING:

- Is there some kind of control over who enters and leaves the building?
- Are entrances, parking areas, hallways, stairways, and laundry rooms well-lighted?
- Are fire stairs locked from the stairwell side?
- Are laundry rooms and storage areas kept locked?
- Do ground floor windows have well-secured grilles or grates?
- Are mail boxes in a well-traveled area? Do they have good locks?
- Have any apartments been burglarized recently? If so, how did the thieves get in?

### YOUR UNIT:

- Does the entry door have a deadbolt lock and peephole?
- Are sliding glass doors leading to balconies secured by pins in the frame or a wooden rod in the track?
- Does the management permit tenants to change locks when they move in?
- Do you leave a radio playing and a light on while you are gone?
- Do you alert your neighbors or your building manager when you leave for a trip or vacation?

When the person shows the money, usually outside the bank, the bunco artist cleverly switches the person's money with paper the same size as dollar bills. The person is told to redeposit the money. While inside the bank, the person discovers the deposit is worthless and the bunco artist disappears with the person's money.

Be suspicious of strangers offering to share found money. Call the police department immediately.

### **HOME IMPROVEMENT:**

A bunco artist working a home improvement scheme usually drives a commercial van or pick-up truck through a residential area. Stopping to talk to a person working in a yard the bunco artist offers to spray the roof, coat the driveway or fertilize the lawn with materials left over from another job. Because the price quoted is low, the person does not ask for a written estimate.

After the work is done, the bunco operator asks to be paid a higher amount than the quoted price. The person is told materials used are stolen and the bunco artist threatens to call the police if the higher price is not paid. To make matters worse, the materials used are often inferior. The roof coating might be whitewash, the driveway coating motor oil and the fertilizer made of sawdust and oil.

Before home repairs are made, deal with and compare estimates from several reputable companies. Verify identification of persons offering to make low priced repairs. If you are suspicious of the repair person, call the police department immediately and give descriptions of the person and vehicle.

### **DOOR-TO-DOOR SOLICITOR:**

As a door-to-door solicitor, the bunco artist asks for a donation to benefit a non-profit organization or purpose or sells a product for a reduced price if the person signs the contract immediately and pays cash at the time of sale.

Verify a door-to-door solicitor's identification and permit. If in doubt, call the police department immediately. Tell the solicitor the contract will not be signed until an attorney has reviewed it.

Bunco operators are persuasive actors and usually persistent ones. The bunco schemes described here have many variations, but all have the same goal -- gaining a person's confidence and money, sometimes amounting to one's life savings.

## OBSCENE PHONE CALLS

Obscene, threatening or harassing telephone calls are criminal acts. The penalties are severe, but there are preventative measures that a person can take.

- ★ If you receive an obscene call, do not react - just hang up.
- ★ Never give your name, address or any other personal information over the phone unless you know exactly who the caller is.
- ★ Note the date and time of all obscene and harassing phone calls and report them to the police department.

## HOME SECURITY SURVEYS

One of the most effective solutions to the problems of crime in our community and to reducing our vulnerability to burglary and vandalism, is to have a Crime Prevention Officer conduct a detailed Home Security Survey in your homes.

Surveys are done upon request of the homeowner and scheduled at a mutually convenient time. A record of each home survey is kept in the Crime Prevention Unit. The record or security survey form contains the name, address, phone number and date of the survey. The Officer documents suggestions for security improvements and leaves a copy with the homeowner. The Crime Prevention Officers will attempt to follow-up on all residential burglaries to persuade the victim to take steps to reduce his vulnerability against further attacks.

The Home Security Survey entails in-depth review of particular security risks unique to a residential dwelling; doors, locks, windows, lighting, shrubbery, etc., for homes and apartments. Security recommendations range from the "free" things a citizen can do (such as leaving lights on when going out for the evening to give the impression that the residence is occupied) to installation of hardware (such as deadbolt locks on doors). In most cases, all that is really needed are some good modern locks and a little common sense.

Of course, if a burglar is determined to get in, he probably can. However, he seeks easier targets in most cases. Time is the burglar's enemy. The longer it takes him to enter a residence/business, the greater his risk of being caught. Besides, when confronted with a sensibly secure home, the burglar knows the occupant is aware of the threat of burglary and may have taken other, more sophisticated steps to delay and detect his attempts.

For some burglars, just the presence of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH warning decals on windows and doors will be a sufficient deterrent. Other common sense steps a homeowner or tenant can take to decrease his vulnerability to burglary is to make his possessions less attractive and deny information as to their existence and location. For instance, numerous packages under a Christmas tree adjacent to a large window or expensive silver sets, gun collections, etc., in display cabinets visible from the exterior of the house are open invitations to burglars.

