



COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

March/April 2007

Volume 11 Issue 2



Inside This Issue

**Block Watch–
Neighborhoods Fighting
Crime** page 1

**Block Watch– Some Facts
About Crime** page 2

**Block Watch– Getting
Organized** page 3

**Block Watch– Some Crime
Prevention Techniques**
page 4

**Block Watch– An Action
Checklist** page 5

**Burglary Prevention–
Operation ID** page 6

Block Watch– Neighborhoods Fighting Crime

When you come home from work and find that someone has broken into your house and taken your property, you will be angry and afraid. You may be frustrated if it takes a few hours for a deputy to show up, when you think it should be just a few minutes.

While you might feel helpless, there are actions that you can take as an individual and with your neighbors to ensure that your community is not victimized in the future.

Neighborhoods who organize themselves as Block Watches (or Neighborhood Watches) are successful in preventing crime. This is true especially with property crimes such as burglaries or car prowls. Nationwide, only 13% of burglaries are “solved” and only 15% of stolen property in burglaries is recovered by police. A neighborhood Block Watch is a key component to preventing you and your neighbors from experiencing these statistics.

Block Watches work by:

- Improving communications between neighbors and between the neighborhood and police.
- Educating the neighborhood about crime threats and crime prevention.
- Increasing surveillance to catch or deter criminals.

According to the Seattle Police Department web site, only two commitments need to be made by the public:

1. To be concerned about your neighbor’s property as well as your own.
2. To take action when you see suspicious activity by calling 911 and/or your neighbor.

Neighborhoods that have had the most success in reducing crime have been the ones that are the most persistent. In some cases a little effort goes a long way and the crime problem seems easy to fix. In other cases, the crime problem seems to stick around no matter what you do.

By setting goals, keeping the communications going, and being open to innovative ideas, Block Watch should be able to reduce crime in you neighborhood.

When citizens share responsibility in preventing crime with the police, crime goes down much faster than if the public relies solely on police to do the work. Police cannot reduce or prevent crime on their own. They need the help of citizens, taking practical steps to protect their property and call 911 when they see crime in progress or suspicious activity.

**Some Crime
Statistics**

*Crime statistics for
Snohomish County in
2005 include:*

- **Violent Crime**
*(murder, rape,
robbery, aggravated
assault)*
 - 594 total incidents
 - 1.9 reported incidents per 1,000 population
- **Property Crime**
*(arson, burglary,
larceny/theft, motor
vehicle theft)*
 - 9,166 total incidents
 - 28.17 reported incidents per 1,000 population

Block Watch– Some Facts About Crime

Most crime that affects neighborhoods includes:

- Theft– taking property from others without permission.
- Robbery– using threats or force to steal from an individual.
- Burglary– breaking into a home or business to steal or commit another crime. Burglary is often confused with robbery. A burglary occurs when no person is present, robbery occurs when people are present.
- Vehicle prowls– breaking into a vehicle to steal or do damage (whether the vehicle is locked or not).

66% of burglaries are residential. Most residential burglaries occur during the day when no one is likely to be home, from 9am to 3pm. Business burglaries occur at night, when businesses are closed.

A car is stolen every 11 minutes in Washington state.

Car prowls happen at night, when people are asleep, to vehicles parked on the street or in driveways.

Criminals do not want to get caught, so they try to do their crimes when and where no one will see them.

Despite what you might see in the media, most crime does not harm people physically. Homicide, assault,

rape, and robbery are a relatively small percentage compared to burglaries, theft, car theft and car prowls. While police departments expend a great deal of resources to solve homicides and assaults, you are more likely to become a victim of property crime.

Police often explain the reason for crime with a Crime Triangle. For a crime to occur, a criminal needs Desire, Ability and Opportunity. Needing money for a drug habit can create a desire to steal. Criminals with experience and who are not incarcerated have the ability to commit crime. Unlocked house doors or windows provide the criminal with the opportunity to commit a crime.

Remove any side of the triangle and you do not have a crime. Government and social service organizations might be able to take away the desire and ability but citizens can remove the opportunity. Taking away the opportunity is the control that you have over your own security.





Block Watch– Getting Organized

When you and your neighbors decide that you need to do something about crime you need to be organized to be effective. How organized you have to be depends on how serious the crime problem is and how many people are involved. If there is just a few of you and you only have an occasional burglary then you can be informal. If there is tens or hundreds, then you may need a more formal organization.

What is important is that you and your neighbors communicate among yourselves about crime and that you tell the Sheriff's Office about crime and suspicious activity in your neighborhood.

Talk to your neighbors about starting a block watch. See if there is interest. To be effective, Block Watches should consist of about 10 to 15 houses, or those houses that can see each other.

If there is interest, schedule an initial meeting. Here you can talk about specific issues in the community, develop goals, and test to see if the neighbors are interested in participating. Also, this is a good time to talk to a representative from the Sheriff's Office (see box for contacts).

If there is interest, decide who will be your Block Watch Captain or Coordinator. A Block Watch Captain keeps the communication going within the Block Watch and between it and the Sheriff's Office. Having regular meetings (once a year might

be enough once you get to a low crime situation, more often if you have more intense crime problems) helps members keep up to date and can be used to discuss situations and as a forum for problem solving. The Block Watch Captain also needs to keep the members and the Sheriff's Office informed of specific incidents of crime or suspicious activity within in the neighborhood and around the neighborhood.

Block Watch Tools. Some essential tools of a Block Watch include:

- **Logs**– Each member of the Block Watch should keep a personal log. Write down the date, time and description of suspicious activity or crime that each member has observed. Logs can be used to determine criminal patterns or pertinent information that could be used to apprehend a criminal.
- **Telephone tree/email list**- Develop a quick and easy method to communicate among the members. A telephone tree allows for rapid distribution of information. Structure your telephone tree so that each member has no more than four or five people to contact. Using email is a newer and popular way to communicate.
- **Neighborhood Map**– Each member should have a map of the Block Watch handy next to their phone. The map has the name, address, phone number and email

(Continued on page 4)

Block Watch– What It Is Not

Sometimes mention of organizing a Block Watch makes people think that they have more to do, need lots of training, and maybe put themselves in danger.

Block Watch members do not have to walk patrols in dark places, confront crooks, or learn how to use a gun.

A neighborhood can have an active Block Watch if everyone keeps alert on what is going on around them as they go about their daily business.

You do not have to be intimate with your neighbors. You just have to know who they are so that you can distinguish what is suspicious activity in your neighborhood. For example, knowing the cars that belong in your neighborhood helps you determine if a strange car is present and maybe you should be more wary.

A Block Watch is not about being paranoid, it is about taking simple, practical measures to protect yourself and your property.



Sheriff's Office— Contacts

For more information about Block Watch and working with the Sheriff's Office contact one of the following people:

- *North Precinct:*
Lt Rob Beidler
(425) 388-7939
- *South Precinct:*
Lt Doug Jeske
(425) 744-6868
- *East Precinct:*
Lt Dallas Swank
(360) 805-6770

Did You Know—

Seattle Police started the first Block Watch program in 1974. It resulted in a decrease in residential burglaries of between 48% to 62% for participating homes.

Block Watch— Getting Organized *cont.*

(Continued from page 3)

addresses of their neighbors and can be used to quickly provide the address of a neighbor who is being burglarized or has suspicious activity around them. It can also be used to communicate with the Block Watch for warnings about specific crimes or suspicious activity in the neighborhood.

Some Tips for Success. Each neighborhood and each situation will be different. But following are some general tips for a successful Block Watch:

- When starting your Block Watch, talk to your neighbors in person. This will give you good idea of how involved your neighbors want to be.
- Hold regular meetings and communicate regularly with the members.
- Consider linking with another organization such as your homeowner's association.
- The Block Watch does not have to work on crime only. Often the local crime problem goes away, but there may be other neighborhood issues that you and your neighbors can work on that you all think are important.
- Have fun. Focusing only on crime can get you depressed. Enjoy working toward a goal. Enjoy working with your neighbors.

Block Watch— Some Prevention Techniques

Crime prevention professionals have developed a concept called Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to help people change their surroundings to enhance prevention and reduce crime. It centers on:

- **Natural Access Control-** Denies access to a crime target and creates a perception of risk in offenders.
- **Natural Surveillance-** Directed at keeping intruders under observation by maximizing visibility with building orientation, windows, entrances and exits.
- **Territoriality-**creates or extends a sphere of influence so users develop a sense of proprietorship.

For more information on methods to prevent crime go to the Sheriff's Web page at:

http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Sheriff/Services/Crime_Prevention/Newsletter_by_Subject.htm

(or Google Community Policing in Snohomish County then click on "Newsletter by Subject") and look at the issues of this newsletter that cover burglary and car prowls.



Block Watch— An Action Checklist

You have secured your home and property. You are now in the habit of locking your car and securing valuables out of sight of passersby.

But criminals will come into your neighborhood. They will try to steal from you and your neighbors.

Your observation and initiative can help to discourage criminals from coming back to your neighborhood.

People often ask “what is suspicious activity?” The answer is anything that may seem out of the ordinary in your neighborhood. Being aware of patterns such as when kids come home, when parents come and go, knowing what your neighbors drive, etc. helps you determine what is suspicious. Some examples of suspicious activity can include:

- Persons loitering around the neighborhood
- Screams or suspicious sounds
- Sounds of breaking glass or shattering wood
- Anyone removing valuables from home or vehicles
- Strange vehicles parked at your neighbor’s home
- Persons going door to door
- Beam from flashlight or light in neighbor’s home
- Vehicles cruising the alleys or neighborhood

- Anyone being forced into a home or car
- Abandoned vehicles

When you see suspicious activity write down the make, model, color and license number of any associated vehicles. Also write down the description of any suspects.

Call 911. Answer the questions of the call taker. Stay on the phone until the call taker is finished asking questions.

After calling 911, call your Block Watch Captain or other block watch members to make them aware of the situation.

Never assume that others will call. Even if they do, that is more information that 911 and deputies can use to determine what to do.

911 Call Priority

911 calls are prioritized based on seriousness. If deputies are busy with calls involving danger to life or crimes in progress, you might have to wait. Be patient, your call is important. Call priorities are:

1. *Physical bodily harm*
2. *In progress calls*
3. *Calls with suspect and potential to escalate*
4. *After the fact/cold*
5. *No suspect calls/nuisance type calls*

911 Checklist

- 1 *Stay calm— speak slowly and clearly.*
- 2 *State what you are reporting (theft, burglary, life threatening injury). Indicate if it is “in progress.”*
- 3 *Give the exact location where the incident is located (street number, apartment number, directions if necessary).*
- 4 *Give your name and the name(s) of any other victims, and type of injuries. Also, give your telephone number.*
- 5 *If a weapon is involved, describe the weapon type (handgun, knife, etc.).*
- 6 *Describe persons and vehicles leaving the scene and direction of travel:*
 - a *For persons give race, height, weight and clothing.*
 - b *For vehicles give license plate number color, year, and model.*



COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

Snohomish County Sheriff
M/S 606 - 3000 Rockefeller Ave.
Everett, WA 98201

Inside This Issue

Block Watch– <i>Neighborhoods Fighting Crime</i>	page 1
Block Watch– <i>Some Facts About Crime</i>	page 2
Block Watch– <i>Getting Organized</i>	page 3
Block Watch– <i>Some Crime Prevention Techniques</i>	page 4
Block Watch– <i>An Action Checklist</i>	page 5
Burglary Prevention– <i>Operation ID</i>	page 6

Rick Bart, Sheriff
Snohomish County
3000 Rockefeller Ave.
M/S 606
Fourth Floor County
Courthouse
Everett, WA 98201
(425) 388-3393
[www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/
Departments/Sheriff/](http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Sheriff/)

Steve Moller– Editor



1-800-
CRIME-13

Tip Lines:

- Phone:
425-388-3845
- Sheriff's Website:
[www.co.snohomish.wa.us/SheriffRpts/
AnonymousTips/
default.htm](http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/SheriffRpts/AnonymousTips/default.htm)

Burglary Prevention– Operation ID

Burglars do not like marked items. Fences will not take marked stolen items or will not give as much money to the thief. Pawn shops will not take marked merchandise.

Engrave valuables that depreciate such as stereo's, computers, TV's, etc. with your driver's license number, preceded with the letters "WADL". DO NOT use your Social Security Number. Even if the burglar cannot sell your stuff he can use your Social Security Number for ID theft. Also, a police agency that recovers your stolen item can look up your driver's license much easier than it can look up your Social Security Number.

Do not mark things that appreciate such as jewelry, watches, paintings, etc. Obviously marking some valuables will detract from their value. Secure appreciating valuables in a safe, locked cabinet or room. Take pictures of appreciating valuables to document your ownership and to help in their recovery.

Also, make an inventory of your household valuables with a description, serial number and photo. Place the list in a safe place in your home and a copy of it in your safe deposit box at your bank.

