



PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

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NUISANCE HOUSES- NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT

We all want to live in communities that are attractive, clean, and safe. Most homeowners keep up their homes. Some neighborhoods may have homeowner’s associations to set standards for their communities. No matter how we do it, we want a good “quality of life” where we live and raise our families.

However, from time to time, some houses may deteriorate into disrepair. Owners may fall into financial difficulties. They may become elderly and isolated and may not be able to keep up the building(s) on their property. The property may go into foreclosure, and for a time it may seem like no one is taking care of a property.

Vacant properties can not only look rundown, they run the risk of accumulating garbage outside, attracting mice or rats, and causing sanitation problems for their neighbors. They also run the risk of being vandalized and burglarized for the contents.

Sometimes empty houses attract homeless people who use them as an easy place to have shelter. Even if they do not have heat, electricity, or water, it is a place to stay out of the elements.

There are dangers to the community with having squatters in a vacant house. If they decide to start a fire inside to

keep warm on a cold night, the whole house could catch fire. The squatters could conduct criminal activity such as drug dealing and/or burglaries and car prowls.

One house can become a nuisance for a neighborhood creating fear and a sense of uneasiness.

Most homeowners do not want a nuisance house in the neighborhood and if one develops they want it to be

cleaned up quickly.

But cleaning up a nuisance house can be a complicated long process that requires the cooperation of the landowner and often multiple governmental agencies.



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<http://sheriff.snoco.org>

NUISANCE HOUSE TEAM- OPERATIONS

To give a better idea for what the Nuisance House Team encounters, here are some links to descriptions of some of its recent operations:

- **The Herald-**
<https://www.heraldnet.com/news/no-one-likes-living-next-door-to-a-trashy-smelly-house/>
- **Squatter eviction-**
<https://www.facebook.com/SnoCoSheriff/photos/a.318645198209560/2942537359153651/?type=3&theater>
- **Stolen vehicle recovery-**
<https://www.facebook.com/SnoCoSheriff/photos/a.318645198209560/2913999472007440/?type=3&theater>
- **Derelict RV-**
<https://www.facebook.com/SnoCoSheriff/photos/a.318645198209560/2702192496521473/?type=3&theater>

NUISANCE HOUSE TEAM- MAINTAINING GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE

For several years, the Snohomish County has been operating a Nuisance Property Team that includes the Sheriff's Office, Snohomish County Code Enforcement, the Snohomish Health District and Snohomish County Human Services to help neighborhoods clean up nuisance houses and properties.

The Team's goal is to improve the quality of life for communities in Snohomish County, reduce crime, and to gain compliance with laws and health and welfare ordinances.

Deputy Chitwood from the Sheriff's Office is part of the team and focuses on criminality such as drug trafficking, burglary, car thefts/car prowls, identity theft, or prostitution which can migrate to a nuisance house. Human Services contributes an Opioid Outreach Specialist who works with squatters at nuisance houses to find treatment options for drug addiction or mental health problems. Snohomish County Code Enforcement and the Snohomish Health District are key in enforcing county building and health codes. As the need arises, the team will work with any governmental entity to help alleviate problems brought on by a nuisance property.



That may include Public Works, Washington State's Child Protective Services, Sheriff's Office Patrol deputies, or any other agency that can help improve the situation.

The team considers that it has been successful when squatters have been evicted, the property owner cleans up the property, and/or criminal activity moves out of the neighborhood. In its 3 or 4 years of operations, the team has processed over 1,000 nuisance properties.

Separately, each agency may only be able to work on a portion of a problem that a nuisance house may present to a neighborhood. By working together, members of the team can pool their resources and coordinate their efforts to more effectively remove the property from a nuisance status.

NUISANCE HOUSES - RESOURCES

To achieve its objectives, the Nuisance House Team coordinates with other departments and agencies which have responsibilities for other ordinances and laws. Some of those agencies include:

Snohomish County Code Enforcement.

Code Enforcement enforces building, zoning, and land use county codes as well as codes that prevent a property from becoming a nuisance in the community. This can include dangerous buildings, junk and/or junkyard conditions, travel trailer, and RV violations.

For more information about Code Enforcement and instructions on how to make a complaint go to:

<https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1152/Code-Enforcement>

Snohomish Health District. The Snohomish Health District has wide ranging responsibilities for the health of Snohomish County citizens. Part of those responsibilities include monitoring garbage disposal in the county. Frequently, squatters may pile garbage on a property since the property is

not being serviced by local garbage hauling companies.

For instructions on how to file a complaint with the Health District go to:

<https://www.snohd.org/192/Garbage-Waste>



Before and after of a successful nuisance house abatement.

Snohomish County Human Services.

Human Services' mission is to help all persons in the county to meet their basic needs and develop their potential. Part of that is to coordinate alcohol and drug addiction treat-

ment services and mental health treatment services.

While Humans Services does not take complaints about violations of county code, it does provide valuable information about drug addiction treatment and mental health services in the county at:

<https://snohomishcountywa.gov/191/Human-Services>

CHRONIC NUISANCE PROPERTY ORDINANCE -

Last year, the County Council passed a new ordinance to set procedures and penalties for chronic nuisance properties.

The ordinance, Chapter 10.75, Chronic Nuisance Property Enforcement and Abatement, can be invoked if authorities execute at least two court-ordered search warrants for drug offenses on the same property within a 12-month period. It could also be invoked on a property with four or more documented nuisances within a 90-day period, or eight or more in a one-year period.

To read the entire ordinance, go to,

<https://snohomish.county.wa.gov/SCC/10.75>

NUISANCE HOUSES- WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can help the county with nuisance properties by being observant of changes to your neighborhood and reporting what you see to the county .

Be observant. Be aware of what is going on in your neighborhood. If you see a property change from well kept up to garbage piling up, junk accumulating, vandalism to buildings, loud noises, or apparent signs of drug activity at the house report it.

Be timely. Snohomish County Sheriff’s Deputy David Chitwood urges everyone to not wait two or three months to call 911, but to call when criminal activity occurs. Also, an early call complaining about garbage or junkyard conditions may help county authorities to stop a problem before it festers too long.

Be patient. Resolving nuisance properties can be complicated and can take a long time. Understand that officials may be having difficulty finding someone who is responsible for the property and can take action. Also, the law requires that property owners be given a reasonable opportunity to fix their problems.

Be persistent. Keep reporting if you see new problems at the property.

Sometimes you might know the property owner or the family of the property owner. Sometimes the property owner is not in the area. If you know them, don’t be afraid to contact them, in a polite way, let them know your concerns about their property.

If the problems are not being addressed, or you do not know who owns the property, let one of the following know what is going on,

- **911.** Call 911 for any in progress crimes. For burglaries or thefts discovered with no suspect information please call the non-emergency number- 425-407-3999.
- **Snohomish Regional Drug and Gang Task Force.** If you suspect drug activity in your neighborhood, report it to this task force- <http://srdtf.org/report-suspicious-activity-0>
- **Code Enforcement.** If you see junkyard or similar conditions contact Code Enforcement at 425-388-3650 or file an online complaint- <https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1152/Code-Enforcement>

OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOODS

MAKING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER

<https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/311/Office-of-Neighborhoods>

Homeless Outreach-
Sgt. Ryan Boyer
Phone: (425) 308-0037
Email: neighborhood-watch@snoco.org

Community Outreach-
Sgt. Rebecca Lewis
Email: Rebecca.Lewis@snoco.org

Nuisance Properties-
Deputy David Chitwood
Email: David.Chitwood@snoco.org

SHERIFF’S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:
<http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/289/Crime-Prevention>

NEWSLETTER INFO

EDITOR

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org



Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office: 425-388-3845
<http://snohomishcountywa.gov/303/Anonymous-Tips>
Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477