



Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's Crime Prevention Tips

The MCPA strives to bring current information regarding prevention topics to its members. Please use these prevention tips to promote safety to the citizens of your community. These tips are great for brochures, newsletters, e-mails, etc.

Topic: Promoting Neighborhood Watch and Reporting Suspicious Activity

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Neighborhood Watch is a cooperative effort between the local law enforcement agency and individual neighborhoods. Neighborhood Crime Watch is simply you and your neighbors watching out for one another. This begins with getting to know each other. Otherwise, how can you tell a neighbor from a stranger?

It is important that citizens become the eyes and ears of the police by reporting suspicious activity that is not a part of the neighborhood's routine. This is explained at an initial Neighborhood Watch meeting along with the minimal criteria for the program: 1) Active participation of at least 50% of the Watch area residents 2) Participation in Operation Identification 3) Meetings at least twice a year (one educational, one social on [National Night Out](#)).

What's in it for the citizens? Neighborhood Crime Watch members have a greater awareness of crime and knowledge of home security and personal safety. Exposure to crime prevention techniques and special events such as National Night Out enhances a citizen's ability to reduce opportunities for criminal acts. Enhanced reporting of suspicious activity makes residents more aware of who belongs in their neighborhood and are more inclined to report suspicious persons and activities to the police. Neighborhood Crime Watch signs serve as a warning to potential criminals that residents are concerned about crime and will call the police when suspicious activity is observed. The program promotes neighborliness by encouraging residents to get to know and interact with their neighbors, including exchanging information concerning vacation plans, vehicles belonging to their household, etc. It also encourages people to be observant of their neighborhood and to attend meetings designed to strengthen neighborhood safety and security. People feel safest, or at least more comfortable, in settings in which they are familiar.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

The time it takes to respond to a crime in progress is a determining factor in the apprehension of a criminal. A delay in reporting a crime by a couple of minutes greatly reduces law enforcement effectiveness. It is better to call in a few mistakes than to have one person become a victim of a crime. State clearly what kind of assistance is needed (police, fire or medical) and stay on the phone to answer all of the questions of the dispatcher. Remain calm. Emergency calls are prioritized according to the degree that persons or property are being threatened.

? Call **911** for emergency situations and post non-emergency numbers for all other situations