

**THE INDEPENDENCE**  
**Neighborhood**  
**Watch Program**

**Guidebook**

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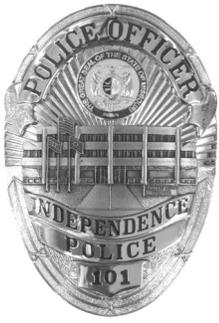
Provided by the:



**Neighborhood Watch Coordinator:**  
**Officer Jodi Grooms**  
**[jgrooms@indepmo.org](mailto:jgrooms@indepmo.org)**  
**(816) 325-7645**

**Neighborhood Watch Coordinator:**  
**Officer Matt McLaughlin**  
**[mjmclaughlin@indepmo.org](mailto:mjmclaughlin@indepmo.org)**  
**(816) 325-7643**

**1717 S. Appleton Ave**  
**Independence, MO 64052**



# INDEPENDENCE POLICE

Officer Matt McLaughlin and Jodi Grooms  
Community Services Unit  
1717 S. Appleton Avenue  
Independence, MO

816-325-7643 and 816-325-7645

Dear Neighbor:

You are receiving this information in response to your recent inquiry into the city's neighborhood watch program. We are a police officers, currently assigned as a crime prevention officer in the Administrative Division. Our office is located at the Englewood sub-station on Appleton Avenue. One of our assignments is coordinating the Neighborhood Watch program.

We hope that you'll take a moment to consider the benefits of forming a neighborhood watch group. Neighborhood watch is a volunteer based, community program in which neighbors make it a point to first, get to know one another and second, make an effort to keep a watchful eye on their neighbors' houses and belongings. It's a way for vigilant and caring neighbors to join together to make a stand against criminal activity in their neighborhoods.

Statistically speaking, neighborhoods with strong watch groups are closer knit and safer communities. Forming and maintaining a neighborhood watch group is not difficult, but will take a concerted effort by you and your neighbors to maintain. One of the goals of the neighborhood watch is to attempt to bring people out of their homes, and into their neighborhoods. This is done through meetings, block parties, neighborhood garage sales, and other various neighborhood activities.

Enclosed in this booklet is information that you'll need to start your own group. There are also flyers (pg. 9) for you to distribute to your neighbors after you have read over the enclosed information. Keep in mind, your neighborhood watch group is yours to manage and operate. Our positions are as coordinators of the program and facilitators of the new watch groups. We assist by providing information on crime trends and crime prevention education, as well as attempting to track operating watch groups within the city. Remember, you must register your group with our unit (pg. 5) in order for us to know you're out there!

When you are ready to organize your first meeting, give us a call at 325-7643 at 325-7645. We will be happy to meet with you, by appointment, and assist in forming your neighborhood watch group. We hope that the information enclosed is beneficial to you, your family and your neighborhood and will help you in expanding or creating a new neighborhood watch group.

Thanks for your time,

*Officer Matt McLaughlin*  
*Officer Jodi Grooms*

THE INDEPENDENCE

# Neighborhood Watch Program

## How to Start a Neighborhood Watch

- (1) **Form a Group.** Talk with some of your neighbors and discuss the benefits of forming a Neighborhood Watch with them. This might require going door to door to meet people who you do not know. Simply getting to know your neighbors is a big part of what Neighborhood Watch is all about. Don't forget to hand out some of these enclosed flyers (pg. 9).
- (2) **Hold a First Meeting.** At the meeting, discuss current crime problems in the neighborhood. Decide and vote on who will be the Block Captain. Regardless of leadership, you need to get as many people as possible on the block to be Block Watchers. They are the eyes and ears of the group.
- (3) **Establish Boundaries.** Figure out the perimeters of your neighborhood that the group will cover: A watch block should not contain more homes than you can handle. Your watch area should not contain more than 25-30 homes, unless the group is registered with the approval of a home owners association or is in an organized residential environment such as an apartment complex or mobile home park. That area is up to you and who else is willing to participate.  
**Make a map:** You can use various websites to print a map of your neighborhood. (Google / Yahoo / Bing) If you don't have those capabilities, contact me and I'll print one for you.
- (4) **Make a Roster.** Make a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of the neighbors who wish to be involved in your group (pg. 7)

**Read the Documents.** Educate yourself and read over this manual.

**Register Your Group:** Complete the Enclosed Registration worksheet (pg. 5) and get it to me.

### **How will the Police Assist me?**

We will assist you in maintaining your watch group in the following areas:

- Discussing and attempting to help resolve any ongoing issues
- Providing you with crime trend updates in both the Neighborhood Watch Newsletter and at monthly block Captain's meetings.
- Meeting with you and/or your group to discuss neighborhood problems.

**How do I get a Neighborhood Watch (Crime Watch) Sign?** I like to stress that a Neighborhood Watch sign is only an effective deterrent when there is an active watch group behind it. A watch sign placed in a neighborhood without such a group works just as well as a pen without ink. The Neighborhood Watch program views its signs as a reward for participating in the program. If you meet the criteria for the **Bronze Level Watch Group**, and complete and return the participation level form, you may request a sign..

THE INDEPENDENCE

# Neighborhood Watch Program

## A Checklist For Starting a Neighborhood Watch Group

This checklist is designed to help you get your group up and running. Please keep in mind that neighborhood watch groups are volunteer based groups, and require your enthusiasm and hard work to get started and maintain.

This checklist is designed to help you form your watch group. As always, if you need any assistance, feel free to contact me. Officer McLaughlin or Grooms at (325-7643)

### Neighborhood Watch Checklist

- A person with true concerns for and a commitment to help reduce crime in your neighborhood.
- A group of neighbors committed to starting a Neighborhood Watch group
- A motivated person willing to be a Block Captain.
- A place to meet: house, community center, school, or church.
- Publicity for the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting, preferably a flyer to be placed on doors.
- A meeting agenda. (discussion topics, etc.)
- A map of the neighborhood with spaces for names, addresses, and phone numbers of all households.
- Facts about crime in your neighborhood, or recent crime trends. (check: [www.crimereports.com](http://www.crimereports.com))
- A means of communicating with the residents (e-mail, fliers, telephone tree).
- A sign-up sheet / roster for those willing to participate in the watch group.
- A list of issues currently affecting your neighborhood.
- Your completed Independence Police Neighborhood Watch registration form.

### Other Points of Consideration

- Keep your group small, and focused. I have come across many extremely motivated individuals who have started out targeting whole neighborhoods, only to quickly burn out when they lack the support of the neighborhood.
- Make your group community based and work to bring your neighborhood together.
- Have other activities focused on bringing youth in your community together.
- Although the basis of the watch group is crime prevention, do not forget the social aspect!

THE INDEPENDENCE  
**Neighborhood Watch Program**

**2020 Group  
 Registration  
 Form**

Registered Watch  
 Group



**Watch Group Information**

Name of Group: \_\_\_\_\_  
 North Boundary \_\_\_\_\_  
 South Boundary \_\_\_\_\_  
 East Boundary \_\_\_\_\_  
 West Boundary \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Houses: \_\_\_\_\_

Please  
 attach a  
 map if it  
 helps  
 explain  
 boundaries

**Watch Group Registration**

In an attempt to better serve the  
 Neighborhood Watch Program, The  
 Independence Police department is asking  
 groups to register their groups annually.

**Completion of this form is a requirement  
 to participate in the citywide  
 neighborhood watch program.**

Upon completion, drop it off at or mail it to:  
 Officer McLaughlin or Grooms  
 The Englewood Substation  
 1717 S. Appleton Avenue  
 Independence, MO 64052:

**Captain Information**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (cell) \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Co-Captain Information**

**Co-Captain Information**

Name	Name
Address	Address
Zip	Zip
Phone (home)	Phone (home)
Phone (cell)	Phone (cell)
E-Mail	E-Mail

(Preferably only ONE captain per group should be registered with the Police Department. Those not directly involved with the management of the group are not captains but are called watchers. The block watchers play an equally important role in the watch group and are the bulk of the membership. Watchers are committed to alerting the police and their neighbors about suspicious activity and crimes in progress.)

**First Time Registry Only**

- (1) - Talk with your neighbors and discuss Neighborhood Watch / Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) - Hold your first meeting / Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) - Attach a map of your neighborhood with your set boundaries / Check:
- (4) - Attach a group roster (names, addresses, phone numbers) / Check:

**Office Use Only**

**Are you on the E-Mail list?**

Date turned in: \_\_\_\_\_ <http://www.indepmo.org/NeighborhoodWatch/Subscribe.htm>

Police Officer Contact Information

Officer McLaughlin 325-7643 mjmclaughlin@indepmo.org  
 Officer Grooms 325-7645 jgrooms@indepmo.org

We require current and accurate information.  
 Please do not write "same as last year", etc..

THE INDEPENDENCE  
**Neighborhood Watch Program**

2019 Optional  
 Participation Levels  
 Form

In order to be an active member of the program, you must meet certain yearly requirements. These requirements qualify your group for such rewards as the monthly newsletters, awards and Neighborhood Watch signs. This form will help you keep track of your groups yearly progress. Make sure to send copies of your paperwork, including maps, sign in sheets, and any other information pertinent to the Neighborhood watch program office.

This information can be sent to **Officer Syme**  
 at: **1717 S. Appleton Ave, Independence MO, 64052**

Group Name \_\_\_\_\_

Captain Name \_\_\_\_\_

Captain Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions? Call**  
**Officer McLaughlin 325-7643**  
**Officer Grooms 325-7645**

**Check**

**Registered  
 Watch Group**



<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) - Talk with your neighbors and discuss Neighborhood Watch.
<input type="checkbox"/>	(2) - Hold at least <b>1</b> watch group meeting / Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	(3) - Attach a map of your neighborhood with your set boundaries / Check: <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	(4) - Attach a group roster (Optional) / Check: <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Recognition: Receive our Newsletter and sign up for the E-mailing list.</b>	

**Bronze Level  
 Watch Group**



<input type="checkbox"/>	(5) - Hold at least <b>3</b> watch group meetings / Dates: _____ / _____ / _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	(6) - Attend <b>3</b> watch Captains meetings / Months: _____ / _____ / _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	(7) - Distribute a Neighborhood Newsletter (print, email, blog, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	(8) - Organize a neighborhood block party / Date: _____
<b>Recognition: A Neighborhood Watch sign &amp; a Bronze Level certificate</b>	

**Silver Level  
 Watch Group**



<input type="checkbox"/>	(9) - Hold at least <b>4</b> watch group meetings / Dates: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	(10) - Attend <b>4</b> watch Captains meetings / Months: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	(11) All addresses marked per city ordinance: <a href="http://www.indepmo.org/ipd/HouseNumbers.aspx">www.indepmo.org/ipd/HouseNumbers.aspx</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	(12) Participate in or host a community event (ex: assist with NNO) / Explain: _____
<b>Recognition: A Silver Level Certificate.</b>	

**Gold Level  
 Watch Group**



<input type="checkbox"/>	(13) Attend <b>5</b> block Captains meetings / Months: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	(14) Complete at least <b>1</b> full year in the program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	(15) One member is Citizens Academy graduate / Name: _____ Class year: _____
<b>Recognition: A Gold Level Certificate &amp; acknowledgement in our newsletter .</b>	

**Please Note: Goals and levels do not roll-over year to year.  
 All goals in each category must be met each year to qualify for the level for that year.** <sup>6</sup>

THE INDEPENDENCE  
**Neighborhood**  
**Watch Program**

**Watch Group Roster**

Group Name \_\_\_\_\_

Captain Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_



*Please complete this form, and send a copy to (or just drop off one off at) 1717 S. Appleton Ave, Independence, MO 64052. You are welcome to keep the original for your records, just send us a copy for your file. Please make sure you submit all meetings sign in sheets by December 15th to ensure that you received credit for your events.*

	Address	Name(s)	Phone	Email Address
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3				
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THE INDEPENDENCE  
**Neighborhood**  
**Watch Program**

Questions?  
 Call 325-7643  
 or 325-7647

**Event Sign-in Sheet**      **DATE:**

**Event Type** \_\_\_\_\_

**Captain Name** \_\_\_\_\_

(meeting, block party, special event)

**Captain Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

	Address	Name(s)	Phone #	Email Address
1				
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# CRIME in your Neighborhood?

YOU SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN OUR



*Crime is a Community Problem* and can only be reduced long-term by efforts from both **the Community AND the Police.**

What are the Benefits of Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch...

1. Deters criminal activity;
2. Creates a greater sense of security and reduces fear of crime;
3. Builds bonds with neighbors; people look out for one another;
4. Stimulates neighborhood crime awareness;
5. Reduces the risk of becoming a crime victim; it reduces the physical, financial and psychological costs of crime;
6. Instructs residents on how to observe and report suspicious activities in your community;
7. Addresses quality of life issues and mutual interests in your community.

Information provided by:  
Crime Prevention Unit  
Independence Police Department  
Officer McLaughlin  
(816) 325-7643  
(816) 325-7645  
1717 S. Appleton Avenue  
Independence, MO 64052



Contact your Neighborhood Block Captain for additional information:

Your Neighborhood Block Captain is: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

[www.indepmo.org/neighborhoodwatch](http://www.indepmo.org/neighborhoodwatch)

# Block Captain's Guide

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## Neighborhood Watch Basics

**What is a Neighborhood Watch?** Neighborhood Watch (NW) is a volunteer based, active crime prevention program where neighbors make a commitment to each other to look out-for each others property and safety in an organized effort with each other and the police. One primary element of the NW program is the commitment among community members to alert the police to any suspicious activities and crimes in progress. Another important part of neighborhood watch is the neighborhood watch members never follow or confront suspects. Leave that to the Police Officers.

**Why do we need a neighborhood watch?** It is obvious that the police cannot be everywhere and see everything. The police need you to be their eyes and ears when they are not around. You need to call the police when you see a crime taking place or suspicious activity in your neighborhood. You above all people will know what suspicious activity is in your neighborhood, because you know who belongs in your neighborhood. Someone witnesses most of the crime that takes place in a neighborhood. The police can not make an arrest without you being a witness to the crime, and for the victim to make a formal complaint of the crime. Our laws in the United States were never designed for the police to enforce laws without your help. **You** are the one who empowers the police to make arrests. The police are there to help you police your neighborhood. It takes everyone to get involved. *It takes a neighborhood to get involved.*

**How does it work?** Many neighbors see crimes or suspicious activity and never call the police. Some feel afraid of retaliation by the criminals, and some feel if it does not affect them directly then it is not their problem. In a Neighborhood Watch, neighbors make a commitment to each other to call the police when they see a crime take place or suspicious activity in the neighborhood. After they call the police, they notify other neighbors of the activity going on so other neighbors are aware of it. This includes other neighbors who can help in visually tracking the activity of the suspect, and provide other witness accounts for the police. Those who are timid about getting involved will feel more secure by having other neighbors participating. There is always security in numbers and crooks feel intimidated by active crime prevention neighborhoods. Criminal activity in the neighborhood is not just your problem but it is a neighborhood problem and the rest of the neighborhood needs to get involved.

**How do you develop a Neighborhood Watch?** You start by talking to your neighbors about neighborhood watch and ask them if they are interested in keeping crime out of the neighborhood. When you have several neighbors who have made a commitment to get involved it is time to have a meeting with your new group. Contact the crime prevention unit, 325-7645 or 325-7643, and make an appointment for a Police Officer or volunteer to come out to your neighborhood and attend your meeting.

Usually Monday thru Thursday are the best days to have a neighborhood meeting with 7 P.M. being the best time. You next need to pass out a flyer to each of your neighbors telling them why you are having the meeting, where the meeting will be and the date and time of the meeting. Your watch area should not be too large. It should only be as large as you can watch and successfully communicate with. The meeting can be held in your home, in your driveway,

your yard, a nearby park, a community church or school. You will have more attendance from the neighborhood if you keep the meeting in the neighborhood.

When the officer or volunteer attends your meeting he will explain to your neighbors the importance of a neighborhood watch and help you to get started. Problems in the neighborhood will be discussed at this meeting along with the solutions to those problems. Remember that this is not a time to complain or tear down the neighborhood, the police, or the courts. It's a time to identify problems and work out solutions and strategies to solve those problems. Most all problems can be solved; it's up to ingenuity of the neighborhood and the police working together to solve those problems. Normally a block captain and a co-captain are chosen by neighbors at this meeting for each block in attendance.

**What do you do after the meeting.** It's time to start policing your neighborhood. What does policing your neighborhood mean? Policing your neighborhood does not mean apprehending criminals or putting yourself in danger. Each person in the judicial system has their perspective job to do. And each job acts as a check and balance to each other so that justice is served in an impartial way. You, as the citizen, are the first line of defense for a neighborhood. You are the eyes and ears for the neighborhood to initiate a response from the police. You have the job of reporting crimes, reporting suspicious activity, being a witness, making formal complaints, providing pertinent information to the police to solve crimes and going to court and testifying against criminals that threaten the peace of your neighborhood. The police officer has his or her job, the prosecutor has his or her job and the judge has his or her job. If one of us fails at our job, then the system breaks down, justice is not served and the criminal is not held accountable for his actions. As adding more police officers to a police department makes it stronger and more productive, adding more neighbors to preventing crime in a neighborhood strengthens the neighborhood and makes it a safer neighborhood. Try to get as many neighbors as possible to make a commitment to join you in watching your neighborhood.

Help them to understand that it is their responsibility, as a neighborhood, to keep crime out and provide a safe neighborhood for everyone. Get together as a neighborhood and build relationships with neighbors. The better you get to know your neighbors the more you will look out for each others well being. As you get to know people, you learn more about who belongs in a neighborhood and what is suspicious activity for your neighborhood. Having a block party twice a year is a good way to get to know neighbors.

Create a newsletter for the neighborhood to keep everyone informed on crimes, suspicious activity or special things happening in the neighborhood. If a theft occurred in the neighborhood wouldn't you like to know about it? The more neighbors you have helping you, the safer you will feel in the neighborhood and the less crime you will have. Make a map of the neighborhood. Several online places will provide maps of your neighborhood. You can also contact Community Development (816) 325-7109 to receive a map made of your neighborhood. Or you can get a picture of your neighborhood from a satellite by visiting [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com) Make sure each person participating in your Neighborhood Watch gets a copy. The map should include name, address, E-mail, and telephone numbers of your neighbors. If you observe a crime take place, you can take out your map and tell the police the exact location of the crime and call the neighbors in the area to advise them.

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## The Role of a Block Captain

**What is a Block Captain?** The Block Captain is the person that keeps things organized. Block Captains set up block parties or meetings, creates the newsletter, passes out the newsletter, keeps the map updated, keeps neighbors informed, and recruits neighbors to be block watchers. Anyone or all of the above jobs can be delegated out to a co-captain or other neighbors by the block captain. The more a block captain delegates to others, the less work they have to do and the responsibilities are shared by others. The block captain needs to keep the neighborhood focused on crime issues and avoid getting involved in other neighborhood issues. This is not a home owners association but a crime watch. Dealing with neighbors differences, property issues or if someone needs to paint their house is not, as a rule, going to bring neighbors together to build a stronger block watch. As a block captain, it is best to stay out of the middle of disputes or gossip. Try to keep neighbors focused on the fact that a neighborhood watch is neighbors protecting the neighborhood from crime. A new block captain can be chosen each year, if the neighborhood desires, or the current block captain or co-captain can continue to serve. The block captain should greet new neighbors to the neighborhood and explain the Neighborhood Watch program to them asking for their help in keeping the neighborhood safe.

**Why a Neighborhood Newsletter?** Make up a newsletter for the neighborhood and pass it out every quarterly or monthly. Newsletters serve several purposes. They let neighbors know each month that the block watch is still operating and reminds people of their commitment to the neighborhood. It also keeps neighbors informed of happenings in the neighborhood. Happenings could be anything from crime, suspicious activity, congratulations to a neighbor, or notification of a sickness or neighbor in need. Everyone likes to be informed and your newsletter will be read by neighbors. The newsletter can be anything from one typed or written page to several pages with advertising in it, paid for by local businesses.

A simple business card copied makes good advertising for a neighbor, and the small fee charged can fund the cost of the newsletter printing or to pay for food at the next neighborhood cook out. Call each neighbor and ask them for news to add to the newsletter each month. Ask other neighbors to take turns in creating and passing out the newsletter, and don't forget to include the kids.

**Why a Map of the Neighborhood?** Creating a map of the neighborhood helps you and the police. It helps the police because you can give them the correct address where the crime is happening, instead of just guessing. When you see a crime take place in the neighborhood and you dial 911 to alert the police, do you know the address? Most of the time you won't and you will be trying to explain to someone over the phone just exactly where this is occurring at the same time pointing at the house over the phone as if the dispatcher can see you pointing. Officers need to know the exact address so they do not pull up directly in front of the house and put themselves in a more dangerous situation. If you have a map near your phone you can count down the number of houses from yours, and tell the police dispatcher the exact address of the incident. After calling the police you can call other neighbors in your block watch near the crime and advise them of what is happening. To make a map, put every house on the block on your map. Add names, addresses and phone numbers to each house. Pass the map out to each person that is in your block watch.

**What is a Block Captain's Meeting?** Every month the Independence Police Department hosts a city-wide Block Captain's meeting. These meetings are open to the public. These meetings are a mandatory part of the Bronze, Silver and Gold participation levels. These meetings are always informative, and usually focus on current crime trends in the city. The meeting topics will range from identity theft, to keeping your car safe. Some presentations come with informative handouts to take back to your groups. Also, all information given, including the presentation itself is free to anyone who wishes it. This way, the information spoken at the meeting can be taken back to individual groups. The meetings last an hour, and are currently held the first Thursday of the month at 7:00PM at 223 N. Memorial Drive, Training Room. For more information about this month's meeting topic, please contact Officer Grooms at 325-7645 or Officer McLaughlin at 325-7643.

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**Neighborhood Block Party Package:** The City of Independence works with neighborhoods in assisting with Neighborhood Block Parties. Neighborhoods can request:

Portions of the street to be barricaded by contacting Independence Public Works Department. Request a Police car, Fire Truck/Engine or AMR Ambulance to make an appearance at your Block Party. Reservations are based on a first-come, first-served policy. Call the Independence Parks and Recreation Department at (816) 325-7370 for details. Keep in mind, it may be difficult for a Police Car to attend when call volumes are high and with our personnel shortages.

**Tips on how to organize a successful Block Party:**

- Organize and hold a Block Party Meeting
- Pickup a Block Party Package Packet
- Turn in A Block Party Application
- Receive Your Block Party Confirmation

The Independence Parks and Recreation Department has numerous games and play equipment that are available for loan for Neighborhood Block Parties. Groups are responsible for game and play equipment pick-up and return. Call the Independence Parks and Recreation Department at (816) 325-7370 for details.

**What are different Themes for Block Parties:** A block party can be anything your neighborhood would like it to be. The idea is to get neighbors together doing something, building relationships. Getting to know your neighbors and building relationships is an important part of any neighborhood watch group. You can block off the street, have it in a neighbors driveway or someone's front yard. You can hire a band or a DJ for music if you desire. Make sure to involve children in these regular neighborhood block parties. Children our part of our community too, and creating a lasting since of pride in their community can go a long way.

Here are some ideas that other neighbors have done:

- Pot luck — Everyone brings two or three items of food
- Dessert bar — Everyone brings their favorite homemade desert and shares the recipe
- Chili supper — Everyone brings some chili and you throw it all in a large pot.
- Ice cream social — Homemade or store bought (homemade is better)
- Water melon feast — have a seed spitting contest
- Mexican, Italian, Chinese or Hawaiian dinner, decorate the area for the occasion.
- Tire pressure check — Check the spare tire too
- When a new neighbor moves in, have a party for them as the guest of honor
- With all the Holidays, it makes a good time for a neighborhood get-together
- Use your imagination and have fun as a neighborhood. If you're too busy to get to know your neighbors then maybe you need to reevaluate your priorities.

## Neighborhood Watch Group Guide Lines

At a minimum, each watch group in the city must register with the Police Department. Watch groups are evaluated before January 1st and July 1st to determine their level of participation. In order to encourage communication and growth in your watch groups, we have developed optional participation levels for the program. From the basic requirements of a watch group to Gold Level status, there are many levels of involvement for the various types of citizens involved. Some watch group members simply do not have the time to be involved more than the basic level, and we understand. Neighborhood watch is meant to be simple and not time consuming. However, we do encourage maximum participation and will assist you in your growth as a watch group. We do require that registered groups have a maximum number of 25 - 30 residences per group, unless the group is registered with the approval of a home owners association or is in an organized residential environment such as an apartment complex or mobile home park. These previously established organizations have proven to make the Neighborhood Watch a great auxiliary piece. It is unrealistic to believe that a block captain can or should be responsible for more than 25-30 homes. Claiming more area than can be monitored and realistically partnering with also limits the opportunity for other interested persons to start their own successful watch group. Keep in mind, the Crime Prevention Unit merely acts as a coordinator and facilitator of the citywide program. Your watch group is yours to manage and operate.

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### **A Registered Watch Group: (Basic requirements for Neighborhood Watch)**

- Talks with neighbors and discusses Neighborhood Watch.
- Holds your first meeting
- Makes a map of your neighborhood with your set boundaries
- Creates a group roster (names, addresses, phone numbers)

**Recognition: Receive my monthly Newsletter and sign up for the E-mailing list.**

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### **Bronze Level:**

- Completes all the requirements of a basic *Registered Watch Group* and in addition:
- Holds at least **3** watch group meetings.
- Attends **3** watch Captains meetings.
- Distributes a Neighborhood Newsletter (print, email, blog, etc.)
- Organizes a neighborhood block party.

**Recognition: A watch sign in your neighborhood & a Bronze Level certificate**

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### **Silver Level:**

- Completes all the requirements of *Bronze Level* and in addition:
- Holds at least **4** watch group meetings
- Attends **4** watch Captains meetings
- All addresses marked per city ordinance ([www.indepmo.org/ipd/HouseNumbers.aspx](http://www.indepmo.org/ipd/HouseNumbers.aspx))
- Participates in or hosts a community event.

**Recognition: Silver Level certificate. additional watch signs may be purchased, \$35 per sign.**

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### **Gold Level:**

- Completes all the requirements of *Silver Level* and in addition:
  - Attends **5** block Captains meetings.
  - Completes at least **1** full year in the program.
  - One member is a Citizens Academy graduate.
  - **Recognition: A Gold Level Certificate & acknowledgement in our newsletter and website.**
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## **How do you become a good motivator for a Neighborhood Watch?**

There are tons of books out there written on the subject of motivation and professional speakers. I have observed some things that seem to work. We do not want to become professional managers. We just want to get the neighbors together to keep crime out of the neighborhood. So where do we begin? It must begin with you. How important is it to you to keep crime out of your neighborhood? Before starting any project, a good manager always counts the costs versus the need or want. The manager then makes a list of goals and objectives he wants to accomplish. The third thing a good manager does is to surround himself with talent better than his own to help and advise him on how to meet these goals. But the real meat of a good manager starts in the heart. The following are a must:

1. Be a good listener and gatherer of information. There are some terrific ideas out there that you need to hear about. Some people keep these ideas to themselves so you have to go after them and ask questions to draw the information out. Share information, progress and ideas at all levels.

2. Have a good name. Always be honest and up front with people. Even if it makes you look bad or you think people will not understand. People are smarter and more forgiving than you think. If people do not trust you, they will not listen to you nor will they help you. Try and treat people better than you would want to be treated. When you reach for a goal that seems out of reach, you will be amazed at how close you sometimes come to it.

3. Learn to like people and ignore their faults. If you concentrate on peoples' faults it's hard to like them. If you don't like them, it's hard to talk to them. If you don't talk to them, you can't motivate them. If it's difficult for you to ignore someone's faults, try this recipe, it sometimes helps me. Make a list of that person's faults and then make a list of yours. My list is usually longer and sounds worse.

4. Anything worth doing takes time and effort on your part. The amount of time and effort you spend depends on the quality of people you get to help you. Think about it. Learn to delegate and trust the ingenuity of those who want to help you reach your goals.

5. Learn to discern the heart of the people around you. The first thing a doctor does in a physical is to check the pulse and blood pressure. If the rhythm is off or the pressure is too high, there are problems developing. Early diagnoses and treatment heads off serious problems that can obstruct your goals or destroy them all together. The longer you wait the more severe the problem usually becomes.

6. Get together on a regular basis with those around you. Develop relationships with all. Whether it be a neighborhood, an organization or any group of people, it is hard to feel a part of something if you are outside the clique. And there is always a clique.

7. Don't be discouraged by roadblocks. They are a part of life. Learn to build new roads when obstacles rise up in your path and detours are needed.

## **Continuing your Neighborhood Watch Group**

Most all people can be motivated. It all depends on the ingenuity of the motivator. Build a fire under someone and they will move. They may not move very far, but they will move. In that case, frequent fires are sometimes needed. Since all people are different, some just need a spark while others need a prairie-fire.

You cannot begin till you ask yourself this question: "How important is it to you to keep crime out of your neighborhood?" Next, make a list of goals you want to meet. You may have a disorderly house in the neighborhood that may be a goal or you may just want to organize the neighborhood to keep crime out. But, you need a goal to keep focused. Most neighbors want to keep crime out of the neighborhood so you have a good start there; they will at least listen.

The personal touch is the only way I know to reach people in a positive way. You have to go door to door talking to people. Anyone in business will tell you that word of mouth is the best way to advertise. Most people feel timid about going door to door to talk to strangers. The same feeling they have when speaking in front of a large group. I felt the same way until I decided to stop talking to strangers and started talking to friends. Whether the group is 10 or 10,000, I look out over the group and see nothing but friends

Going door to door is no different. Friendships are like gold nuggets so gather a whole bag full of them. Neighborhood Watch is like anything else. It may be the best thing around to improve the quality of life but you still have to sell it to people. They need to know why it is so important for them to participate and be a part of the neighborhood. If you do not know yourself, you sure won't be able to convince anyone else. Talking from the heart is so much better than opening a can of words.

I have greater advantage than most people at knowing if neighborhood watch works because I have the opportunity to see so many successes in neighborhoods. Neighborhood Watch is the most successful crime prevention tool and neighborhood builder I have ever seen. It can take any neighborhood and single-handedly greatly increase the quality of life in that neighborhood. Getting people together is sometimes very difficult because of our busy lives. We work all day and want to come home and relax. I like to do that also. But people make time for important events. You just have to convince them that this is an important event and actually make it an important event for the neighborhood.

Find a couple of neighbors who feel the way you do and discuss your goals with them and ask them their opinion of what they perceive could be problems in the neighborhood. You and a couple of neighbors go door to door talking to neighbors asking for their support in stopping crime in the neighborhood. Hold a meeting at someone's house and discuss the reasons why it takes everyone in the neighborhood to participate.

Give everyone in the neighborhood a job to do to participate in neighborhood watch that does not take very much time. Change block captains or co-captains frequently so people don't get burnt out. Make a list of tasks and tell each person this is their responsibility for say, the next two months. Don't ask, just hand them the task and tell them why it is important to the neighborhood. Some people will refuse but most won't when they know others are counting on them. And, usually, the task is simple and does not take much time. The task could be anything from gathering a joke or recipe for the newsletter, to watching a neighbor's house while they are gone on vacation.

Your group needs to brainstorm to come up with ideas. Try to make the tasks fun or rewarding to people. Get to know the specialties of each neighbor. A carpenter might write an article for your newsletter on some tips that make it easier for do-it-yourselfers in the neighborhood. Each person has a specialty and something important to contribute. It does not matter whether it's through their occupation, a hobby, or how to boil water. Everyone has something to contribute. A good block captain finds out these things and capitalizes on them. Don't do the work for people. Let them be creative and responsible for their own jobs.

Don't give large time-consuming tasks to people unless they want it. For example a newsletter can be very time consuming. Split up the assignments among the neighborhood. One types, three gather assigned information, one puts it together, one copies and two distribute. Include teenagers and children in the tasks. Ask them to write articles. Ask neighbors to make the task a family project so the work goes quickly and you have input from the whole family. You might want to put tasks in one hat and names in another. Then draw them out at your next meeting. There are all kinds of things you can come up with.

Why is this important? It is part of getting people together. A neighborhood that does not get together is not a neighborhood. If you are not a neighborhood, you will not look out for each other. I have heard and seen too many successes, failures and confessions to think otherwise.

**Strategies for an Effective Neighborhood Watch:** Individual citizens have two choices in reference to dealing with crime, the right way, and the wrong way.

The Wrong Way:

-Do it alone — feel the effects of a crime by yourself. Tell no one. Constantly be a victim, and live in a world where you are unsure who else is being victimized by the same people. Maintain an attitude of, "The police can't help, and my neighbors don't care."

The Right Way:

-Activate your neighborhood watch network — several hours after the incident if need be. First, contact the police (at the very least, use the non-emergency number 325-7300). Someone else may have been victimized the same way and by calling the police, this information may be linked to an identical crime, one you could also connect to your own crime. Help them help you by reporting your crime to the police. Second, activate your neighborhood watch network, gather more information or call the watch group on the next block. Find out who else might have seen something, or been connected to the crime. Groups can communicate in numerous ways, cell phone, e-mail and text messages are just a few.

**How to Keep Your Block Watch Afloat:** A few of our neighborhood watches are experiencing some internal problems. Some complaints I have received are: lack of interest on the part of the neighborhood or the Block Captain; neighbors gossiping about neighbors; neighbors feuding with other neighbors; no one doing anything about the problem house or crime in the neighborhood. Some problems are just the character of the neighborhood and I can't begin to address these. But here are a few suggestions that may help you avoid running your watch aground.

1. Keep it simple: Don't try to solve everything you perceive as a problem in the neighborhood. Remember your focus is on crime, not how your neighbors' house looks.
2. Gossip: Speaking bad about a neighbor tears down a neighborhood causing disharmony, confusion, and crime. Speaking good about a neighbor builds up a neighborhood building harmony, trust and safety. Which neighborhood do you want to live in?
3. You need a cheerleader: If you don't have interest in the neighborhood it's because you don't have a cheerleader. A cheerleader is someone who brings the neighborhood together, builds it up and keeps the interest in crime prevention on fire. I am totally convinced that, with the right cheerleader, you could walk into any prison and get the inmates excited about crime prevention. There are so many holidays and events throughout the year. Pick four and get together and have fun as neighbors and friends. It builds relationships and trust.
4. Live up to your commitments: It used to be said in this country that your word or a handshake was as good as a contract. Are you living up to your commitment to your neighbor — to look after his property and safety? Have you ever read the Declaration of Independence? Now those fellows made a commitment to one another. Commitments always have a ripple effect. Their commitment to freedom has lasted over two centuries and has affected billions of people. Everyone we touch causes a ripple effect. Try to make yours a positive one.
5. Inquiring minds want to know: Give information to your neighborhood about your neighborhood on a regular basis. People want to know what is going on around them. Newsletters are vital to a neighborhood watch.

I want to encourage you all to keep up the good work you have been doing. If you encounter rough seas, don't abandon ship, but ride it out. There are no rocks in this sea or waves too large; to sink your ship except those we create in our own mind. Thank you for taking a stand against crime to make Independence a safer place for your children and next generation.

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## **Your Neighborhood Watch Network**

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of the neighborhood watch program is helping aid in the capture of a criminal. If you see someone suspicious in your neighborhood call police, but then contact others that can aid in following the suspects actions. With your numerous number of eyes, you can keep the police updated as to their whereabouts through 911 dispatch. The police have only two eyes and unless you tell them in detail and accurately what they are looking for, they probably won't be able to find the suspect.

The police come in a very obvious marked car, making casual observances is virtually impossible and they can only be at one place at a time. If you, as an individual or as a group, keep them informed give them great information and tell them where to look, they can then go to the most recent sighting and possibly apprehend the suspect before gathering information from the first victims.

Most importantly, alert your surrounding neighborhoods through the newsletter you share or through phone calls about the crime so they too can be alert and informed. They may share more information with you and police. Others may have suffered the same crime, the same night and will be willing to go with you to prosecute in court. There is strength in numbers in front of the judge. Learn to work as a group. Imagine one square mile, organized with Watch groups that communicate and keep each other informed to fight crime, very powerful, and possibly very effective when the right strategy is in use, be a team player, not a loner. -

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## A Quality Neighborhood Watch

I would like to address the importance of not just having a neighborhood watch, but having a quality neighborhood watch. Most people agree that a neighborhood watch is a good idea, but they would rather have someone else do it. The three most common reasons for this attitude are:

1. *Apathy*
2. *Don't have the time*
3. *Fear of retaliation*

Even though these may seem to be legitimate reasons for non-involvement, I think if we look at them more closely you will find them to be unfounded.

**Apathy:** Let's start with apathy, which is defined as a lack of feeling, absence of emotion, indifference. Can you really say to yourself that you really don't care if there is crime in your neighborhood? Of course you care. Most people care. One man told me that as long as it did not affect him personally, he did not care. That's being pretty self-centered. I'll bet he didn't share toys when he was a little boy. When he becomes the victim of a crime, he either becomes motivated to get involved in some measure of crime prevention or complains that someone should be doing something about this. As harsh as it may sound, apathy is the most dangerous crime in America today. If it were not for this apathy, we would not have a crime problem. We seem to think the answer to the crime problem is to spend more money on more police officers, more programs, and more laws. What we need is for more citizens to get involved and work with police.

**Time:** Recently a lady told me she would like to get involved in neighborhood watch but she just didn't have the time. My first question to her was "How much time does it take?" Her response was that she did not know. My second, obvious, question to her was "Then how do you know you don't have time?" After she pondered over this question for a few moments, she blurted, "But I am never home." My response was, "Then you need a neighborhood watch in your neighborhood more than anyone." Neighborhood watch is a very simple program. It's called neighbors looking out for neighbors.

**Retaliation:** If I get involved by being a witness against a criminal, he may retaliate against me by vandalizing my property or causing physical harm to my person or family. Retaliation by a criminal against a witness is very rare. I have only heard of two cases of retaliation and both of these were vandalism to property by breaking a window. Retaliation by personal harm to you is extremely rare and I have never heard of a case in Independence. The bottom line is your chances of getting hit by a car while crossing the street is probably greater than any retaliation from a criminal. We should never let fear keep us from doing what is right or helping out a neighbor. Fear is a normal emotion that everyone has. It's the safety valve that helps us to use caution and think clearly in situations that could be harmful to us. But when we allow fear to control and make decisions for us it becomes a problem. Is it right to stand by and watch someone physically harm another person when you have the ability to summon help? Is it right to stand by and watch someone steal another person's property and do nothing? A quality neighborhood watch is all the neighbors coming together, watching out for each other and taking upon themselves the responsibility of keeping a crime free neighborhood.

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## Community Policing and You

Community Policing required your participation. A common asked question is how many police officers patrol the city? On any given day, roughly 14-17 officers patrol the city, and answer calls for service. The amounts to 7-8 north of 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7-8 south of 23<sup>rd</sup>, and one police wagon. Officers work 12 hour shifts, with an overlap between 6-7 AM and PM.

**Traffic Problems?** Call 325-7290. Specific officers are responsible only for traffic problems. You can do something about speeding in your neighborhood. Call the traffic unit at 325-7290 and tell them the problem area and time of day this area is a problem. You will be put on a list and when they get to your area they will set up speed enforcement and try to reduce the problem.

**Vandalism Problem?** Call the non-emergency number: 325-7300. Vandalism usually occurs after curfew. Parents, you have a responsibility to know the whereabouts and activities of your teens. Everyone else has the responsibility to report these teens to the police when they are caught in the act. You have to observe them in the act: ID the car, the person driving the car or the person committing the act of vandalism. You have to be alert when they think you are not watching. You have to watch either out your window or from a chair in your front yard or from your car parked so you can see and watch. Use a cell phone to quickly call the police. You have to protect your home, your block and your neighborhood with your eyes. Then you have to report what you see to the police. Vandalism is costly. If one act occurs, there were probably others around the neighborhood. Two or more angry neighbors will make an impression on the judge when you take these teens to court. Make them accountable. Help their parents raise responsible citizens by showing them how the system works. Use the system or you allow more crime to occur.

**Reports:** Tell the police officer you want to write a police report, if you believe one is necessary. It is your directive that will begin the process to bring these vandals to justice. You have to press charges: **no victim, no crime.** Sometimes the criminal is not caught the same day. If they are caught later, wouldn't you like to be notified? How can the police notify you if they don't know you have been a victim? If you have been a victim of a crime, any crime, and the crime is not a life threatening emergency, call the non-emergency number and have them send an officer, tell them you want to make a report. Get the report number and then go to the station later and get a copy of this report. Keep a 'paper' trail. Document everything. Be a responsible neighbor. If you see something suspicious, call the police and then call your neighborhood newsletter so the area can be alert to crime. Let's work together to keep Independence safe. What plan should we use to watch at night? Shall each block be responsible for their own? Odd number houses watch an odd numbered days and even numbered houses watch on even numbered days? What are your thoughts? We can use our phones to call as we watch them. We can send a message that we have a zero tolerance neighborhood.

(This Guidebook was compiled using previous neighborhood watch sources written by various contributors along with new program information and guidelines. This material is for personal educational use only and is not to be reproduced without permission.)

**Thanks for your help in making Independence a  
Safer and more Productive City.**