

Introduction to the Essex Neighborhood Watch Program

To all Essex and Essex Junction residents: Our goal for our Neighborhood Watch program is really built on *what works* for *each individual* neighborhood.

If you are interested in creating a Neighborhood Watch group we suggest you begin by contacting your neighbors to determine if they are interested and invite them to an introductory meeting. (You will probably find that neighborhoods that have recently been victimized by vandalism, burglaries, larcenies, etc. are more interested, receptive and anxious to participate. As sometimes occurs, when the situation improves, the offender(s) are apprehended and/or arrested, and things begin to again feel "comfortable", interest may wane.) We find that by keeping the "neighborhood" groups small, more divided by street than by actual neighborhoods that may include 50 or more homes, is more easily managed and maintained. After determining interest in participation, notify us and we will do our best to accommodate you and your neighborhood. At this point you can send out letters (like the one copied below) to your neighbors with a date, time and location for your first meeting.

At the original meeting we introduce the NW program, hand out materials that can be found online at www.usaonwatch.org, show a short video, Joining Forces: Neighborhood Watch, which illustrates the many ways a NW program can work, and ask for volunteers who would be willing to become the NW Captains for their neighborhood.

We ask that NW Captains maintain a list of all participating neighbors (and encourage at least a 50% participation), including name, address, home and work telephone numbers, email address, and cell telephone numbers. This provides us with a contact in case we have a problem with notifying a homeowner and need contact information and provides NW Captains with an easy way of communicating with their NW group when we send out informational email. We also maintain an email group list of all NW Captains for ease of sharing current crime trends, announcing NW Captains meetings, providing crime tips, etc.

After the original set up of NW groups, our only actual continued contact, unless there is a specific request or a complaint, is a twice yearly NW Captains meeting and participation in National Night Out. We try to schedule the NW Captains meetings in the spring (preferable before the weather is too nice) and fall (before Halloween). National Night Out is always the first Tuesday in August.

During the NW Captains meetings we discuss any recent crime trends, what we (the police) are doing to counteract criminal activity and our proactive efforts, recent stats on criminal activity in the area, any announcements of upcoming things of interest, maybe the recent YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior) stats, and we invite a guest speaker. The meetings are usually about 1 1/2-2 hours on Monday or Tuesday evenings.

Some examples of speakers we have had include:

- A representative from the AG's office speak on identity theft,
- Recovering drug addicts to tell their story and how their habit resulted in increased criminal activity to support their habit,
- A representative from the School Public Safety Committee to present on their work to prepare our schools in case of a variety of disasters,
- The Reparative Board speak on the types and numbers of cases they handle and how they compliment the criminal justice system,
- The DEA and our BCI speak of the types of drugs found in our community and how to better recognize and report suspicious activity,
- A panel to discuss domestic violence (following our two homicides) in the community,
- A speaker to talk about Internet crime, computer viruses, SPAM, spy ware, hacking, on-line frauds, wireless network problems,
- An introduction to our tactical team, its development, training, uses, and successes,
- A panel (DEA Agent in Charge, judge, defense attorney, and detectives) on the far reaching and consequences of substance abuse and innovative ways to address the problem,
- Representatives from several local alarm companies with information about their services, security systems,
- A panel of youth from a local rehab program to tell their story, including criminal activity, how they chose their targets for burglaries and larcenies, and their struggle to become drug free.

On National Night Out, the first Tuesday in August, we ask the NW Captains to invite their neighbors to meet (at a home, in a garage, for a neighborhood BBQ, in a neighborhood park, whatever works - they usually have a pot luck dinner) in the evening. They let us know where and when they will meet and we then work to arrange for a police representative, a member of the local government (Village trustee or Town selectperson), a youth from Essex CHIPS (our community coalition) to travel to each of the neighborhood gatherings. We provide crime prevention information, recent crime trends, and upcoming programs for youth and adults, and hand out "treats."

Example introductory letter for the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program.

Dear Neighbor:

This is an invitation to you to help crime proof our neighborhood.

We are getting together to talk about Neighborhood Watch, a simple neighbors-helping-neighbors program, that has helped other communities reduce crime by as much as 65%. Many watch groups have not only seen crime go down, but have discovered a new feeling of caring and belonging among neighbors. Many have used their combined efforts to improve their streets, parks, recreation opportunities, and local services.

All of us are concerned about becoming the victim of a crime, but no one of us can fight crime alone. Not even the police can do it without our help. And isolating ourselves behind locked doors, not knowing our neighbors actually makes it easier for burglars and other criminals to take advantage of our neighborhood.

At a Neighborhood Watch meeting, one goal is to form a partnership between you, your neighbors, and the Essex Police Department, to help prevent and reduce crime. Information about the police department and home security will be presented.

What is asked is really quite simple, such as: picking up the newspapers and mail when your neighbors are away on vacation; keeping an eye out for unusual activity, like a strange person snooping around the neighborhood or a house, then alerting the police and other neighbors; escorting a frightened shut-in to a community meeting; visiting someone who has been the victim of a crime; and making your home more difficult for a burglar to enter.

You can help decide the best ways to help protect our neighborhood by telling us what concerns you. Let's get together to organize and talk about Neighborhood Watch in our neighborhood! Please call me at the telephone number listed below and let me know you are interested in attending a Neighborhood Watch meeting for our neighborhood. This meeting would be held at a later date with out neighbors and a member of the Essex Police Department.

Contact for More Information:

Include your name, address, etc.

I hope this information helps. We ask the NW groups to do what works best for each individual group, rather than make specific demands on them. Some neighborhoods are more active than others. Some neighborhoods have email trees and regularly send email out, including what I send. I try to send out an email about monthly with some type of crime prevention information.

If you are interested in monitoring many of the complaints that the Essex Police Department respond to you can do this by checking out this link:
<http://www.crimereports.com>

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

Linda

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