



# COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

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## Apartment Watch– Residents and Management Fighting Crime

When we think of Neighborhood or Block Watches we usually think of them in neighborhoods with single family homes. Homeowners fix up their locks in their doors and windows. Maybe they fix their landscaping so that potential burglars can be seen from the street. Neighbors get together, meet with the local police, learn crime prevention techniques, start citizen patrols, pass information about suspicious activity to the police.

Block Watches (or Apartment Watches) can be organized in apartment complexes also. The basic concept is the same as with single family homes. The benefits are also the same– reduced crime in the neighborhood.

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.

While the basics are the same, the environment is different. In a neighborhood with single family homes, each family is responsible for improving the physical security of their own homes. In an apartment

complex management needs to take responsibility for ensuring that each unit is secure and that the apartment grounds are secure.

Tenants and management need to take responsibility for organizing the Block Watch, keeping communications open between tenants, management and local police, and for reporting criminal and suspicious activity to police.

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, the Block Watch should be able to reduce crime in the apartment complex.

When citizens share responsibility in preventing crime with the police, crime goes down much faster than if the public were to rely 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.



## Preventing Car Prowls/Thefts— Some Simple Steps

- *Keep your car locked when parked and close all windows.*
- *DO NOT leave anything, valuable or not valuable, in your car that can be seen from the outside.*
- *Use a steering or brake lock such as The Club.*
- *Take the removable faceplate of your radio, if you have it.*
- *Consider a car alarm or tracking device such as Lojack.*

## Personal Security— Keeping Safe

- *Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Walk with purpose.*
- *When moving between your unit and your car have your keys in your hand.*
- *Avoid situations that would make you vulnerable to crime (i.e., overloading yourself with baggage, going into dark parking lots and alleyways, etc.).*

# Apartment Watch—*Physical Security*

The physical security of each apartment and the apartment complex is important to discouraging crime. You, with the cooperation of the apartment management, can ensure that the building is safe and secure.

### Securing your apartment unit:

- Make sure the door to your unit is secured with a dead bolt lock and a wide angle viewer. Dead bolts (with 2 to 3 inch screws securing the face plate) will prevent burglars from kicking the door in. The angle viewer allows you to see who is at the door before you open it for them.
- If your unit has a sliding glass door, be sure that it has a “Charlie Bar” to prevent it from being forced open from the outside and pins in the overhead frame so that it cannot be lifted out.
- Be sure the unit’s windows have adequate locks.
- Be sure all door and window frames are strong and tight enough to prevent forcing or stripping.
- Keep your front door locked at all times. Be sure your windows and sliding glass door are closed and locked when you are away from your unit and when you are asleep.

### In your apartment unit:

- Use timing devices to turn on and off lights and/or a radio when you are away for long periods of time.
- Don't open the door to a stranger requesting help or asking to use of your telephone; offer to make the call yourself.

### Securing your apartment complex:

- Be sure that driveways, walkways, entrances, elevators, parking areas, hallways, stairways, laundry rooms, storage rooms are well lighted 24 hours a day.
- Be sure mailboxes have good locks and that they are located in well traveled, well lighted areas.
- Be sure that the grounds are well maintained— promptly replace burned out lights; keep landscaping well trimmed, don't let it become overgrown; keep trash picked up, don't let litter stay on the grounds.
- All addresses and unit numbers should be at least 10 inches tall, a contrasting color with the building to ensure good visibility.



## Apartment Watch— Getting Organized

Something happens, a series of car prowls, car thefts, burglaries, or maybe mail theft.

You and your neighbors get together and find out that many of you have been victimized. You talk to the apartment manager about the situation. You ask for a talk about crime prevention from a representative of the local precinct of the Sheriff's Office. Now what?

Get organized. Develop an operations plan.

**Get organized.** Your organization does not have to be elaborate. In fact, the simpler the better. Try to recruit a small group of your neighbors as an organizing committee. If you are in a large apartment complex, you might organize your building. As you become successful, you can expand to other parts of the complex. Include the apartment management. Their cooperation is essential to a successful program.

The National Sheriff's Association (NSA) has a helpful manual with many good suggestions for getting organized:

[http://www.usaonwatch.org/resource/neighborhood\\_Watch/watchmanual.pdf](http://www.usaonwatch.org/resource/neighborhood_Watch/watchmanual.pdf)

**Develop an operations plan.** Like your organization, your plan should be simple. The essence of a block watch is **communications**. You want to be educated in prevention meas-

ures that you can take and you want to help the police catch the criminals who are victimizing you. In cooperation with your apartment management do the following:

- Survey your apartment complex keeping in mind the security suggestions on page 2. Develop a timeline to fix any problems that you might find.
- Encourage your neighbors to call 911 if they see any suspicious or criminal activity in the complex.
- Develop a phone tree and/or email list. They can be used to alert your neighbors to any suspicious or criminal activity, allowing them to ensure their property is secure and keeping them watchful to any problems.
- With your neighbors, brainstorm problems in the complex and develop a plan to solve them. For example, young working mothers might need help taking care of their kids, teens might need something to do after school, elderly neighbors might need someone to look in on them. Sometimes issues like these can lead to crime or can allow crime to come into your complex. Working on them helps the police and helps your complex keep crime away from you.
- Have fun! Making crime prevention fun will keep everyone involved.

### 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.*



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### 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)

## Operation ID– Marking Your Property for Protection

**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. Also, record the serial numbers of your valuables.

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.