
Neighborhood Watch Manual



Costa Mesa Police Department



“The eyes and ears of law enforcement.”

This publication was created in-house by the Costa Mesa Police Department

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What is Neighborhood Watch?

A Neighborhood Watch program is a group of people living in the same area who want to make their neighborhood safer by working together and in conjunction with local law enforcement to reduce crime and improve their quality of life. A Neighborhood Watch group consists of 10-15 surrounding neighbors more or less, depending on the neighborhood block. Surrounding neighbors include to the back, front, and sides of a home. The groups have regular meetings to plan how they will accomplish their specific goals. Neighborhood Watch groups have specific leaders and assigned responsibilities.

Neighborhood Watch resembles homeland security at the most local level. It is an opportunity to volunteer and work toward increasing the safety and security of our homes and our homeland. Neighborhood Watch empowers citizens and communities to become active in emergency preparedness, as well as the fight against crime and domestic terrorism.



Community Benefits of Neighborhood Watch

In addition to the benefits that Neighborhood Watch volunteers and their communities have experienced throughout the years, such as crime reduction and a better quality of life, Neighborhood Watch programs also offer other community benefits. For instance, Neighborhood Watch groups provide community members with a greater sense of security, responsibility, and personal control.

Neighborhood Watch groups build community pride, unity, and prepare us for helping ourselves and others in our community.

Objectives and Purpose

The Neighborhood Watch Program serves as the eyes and ears of the Costa Mesa Police Department (CMPD) and is not a vigilante activity. We strive to keep the community safe through proper reporting of crimes, and it is this cooperation that will assist the CMPD to provide its community residents with excellent service. The program enlists the active participation of residents to be observant and alert as to what is happening in the neighborhood, in cooperation with CMPD, to reduce crime in communities throughout Costa Mesa.

Neighborhood Watch is a national program founded by the National Sheriffs' Association in 1972. It requires contributions at multiple levels, from entire departments to individual citizens. The National Sheriffs' Association is working with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice to form new Neighborhood Watch groups and revitalize existing groups. In order to reach the citizens, local law enforcement agencies have been given a charge to involve the people in their community.

Who is Involved?

Any Costa Mesa resident can be involved in a Neighborhood Watch group. Let's review the roles and responsibilities of various participants so you can find your place within Neighborhood Watch.

Role of Law Enforcement

- ❖ Promoting the Neighborhood Watch Program
- ❖ Assist group with meeting presenters
- ❖ Train and guide the group
- ❖ Build and maintain community partnerships
- ❖ Review
 - Look at recent calls for service
 - Drive through the area to assess it
 - Find out why the group wants to start



Neighborhood Watch is 90% the community and 10% law enforcement

Role of Area Coordinator

- ❖ Acts as liaison between law enforcement and block captains
- ❖ Assist or arranges training programs
- ❖ Obtains and distributes materials to block captains
- ❖ Expands the program and maintains lists

Role of Block Captain

- ❖ Acts as a liaison between block residents and the coordinator
- ❖ Establishes a “telephone chain” or email list
- ❖ Encourages neighbors to join
- ❖ Keeps in contact with immediate residents

Role of Resident Participants

- ❖ Report suspicious activity
- ❖ Stay informed
- ❖ Attend watch meetings
- ❖ Participate in watch activities

Starting or Revitalizing a Group

Starting a group is as simple as six steps. Listed below is the list of what you must complete in order to form a recognized Neighborhood Watch group.

1. Recruit and organize your neighbors (ideal size of 10-15 neighbors per group)
2. Go online to www.costamesaca.gov/police and download the application form
3. Email that form to CMPD: neighborhoodwatch@costamesaca.gov
4. Host kickoff meeting and establish how regularly the group would like to meet
5. Discuss community concerns and develop an action plan
6. Implement a phone tree and take action steps

There is a separate form to request police representation to attend your meeting as a speaker. Please make sure you have tentative dates to propose. The officer or CMPD representative will attend your group meeting with a crime assessment of your neighborhood, safety tips, and Neighborhood Watch stickers to pass out to attendants.



The form is titled "Neighborhood Watch Phone Tree" and features the Costa Mesa Police Department logo on the left and a "No Fire" symbol on the right. It is designed as a hierarchical tree structure. At the top is a box for the "Neighborhood Watch" contact, with fields for Name, Address, Phone, Cell, and Email. Below this are two boxes for "Block Captains" or "Sub-Group Leaders", each with the same contact fields. Each of these two boxes branches into two more boxes, resulting in a total of eight boxes for individual neighbors. Each neighbor box contains fields for Name, Address, Phone, Cell, and Email. At the bottom of the form, there are two long horizontal lines for "Police Department (non-emergency):" and "Fire Department (non-emergency):".

Neighborhood Watch Meeting Outline

The kickoff meeting is an introduction to the Neighborhood Watch program and can cover topics that directly relate to your neighborhood. The proceeding meetings can be simple and informal to keep residents updated, or it can be more in-depth with presentations and a flashlight walk.

A Meeting Agenda Can Include:

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Know your neighbor exercise - first and last name, family unit, address, phone number, etc.
- ❖ Explanation of how to report a crime and emergency and non-emergency numbers
 - When to call
 - Who to call
 - What information is useful when reporting a crime
- ❖ Explanation of CMPD geographical policing and calls for service
- ❖ Other services including trash clean-up, graffiti, animal control
- ❖ Overview of crime issues pertinent to the Neighborhood Watch area
- ❖ Crime prevention basics and safety tips
- ❖ Staying connected with CMPD through available networking channels
- ❖ Schedule a follow-up meeting that comfortably fits with everyone's schedule



Additional topics to consider:

- ❖ Multi-media presentations
- ❖ Neighborhood activities that will bolster cohesion
- ❖ Flashlight walk: after dark, residents in the group walk with a flashlight through their block area with a CMPD representative to point out areas of concern and discuss crime prevention

Please keep in mind that Neighborhood Watch is not a vigilante activity, does not assume the role of law enforcement, and does not enforce laws. It also does not condone peeping toms.

Keeping Neighborhood Watch Active

It is possible that when a neighborhood crime crisis goes away, so does the enthusiasm for Neighborhood Watch. It is important to keep Neighborhood Watch actively working for the community to really feel the benefits.

Organize regular meetings that focus on current neighborhood issues including drug abuse, bias-motivated violence, fraud, larceny, safety, crime in schools, and victim services. Meetings should be scheduled to accommodate everyone's busy schedule so the whole group can comfortably attend these meetings.

Organize community patrols to walk around streets and/or apartment complexes and alert CMPD to any crime or suspicious activity.

Organize a social event with neighbors such as a block party, a BBQ, potluck dinner, sports game, or a nearby park picnic.

If you have not already done so, make your neighborhood safe by securing your homes with motion-sensor lights, security cameras, and if possible, a medium-sized guard dog.

Adopt your neighborhood street, park, or playground and with safety precautions observed, pick up litter. **Report graffiti and any city equipment in need of repair to The City of Costa Mesa Public Services at (714) 327-7491.**



Knowing What to Watch For

It is important to always be alert and observant. Studies have shown that when residents know how to report suspicious activity, crime rates in their neighborhood can be reduced significantly. Below is a list of what to watch for and report immediately:

- ❖ Someone in distress and shouting for help
- ❖ Someone looking into windows and parked cars
- ❖ Unusual noises
- ❖ Property being taken out of a house where no one seems to be home
- ❖ Property being taken from a business that is closed
- ❖ Any vehicle moving slowly without apparent destination, or without lights at night
- ❖ Anyone being forced into a vehicle
- ❖ A stranger sitting in a car or stopping to talk to a child unknown to them
- ❖ A stranger utilizing drugs
- ❖ Abandoned vehicles

How to Report a Crime

When reporting a crime that is occurring or has just occurred and with a suspect still in the area, call 911 immediately. Never confront or try to directly investigate something that is suspicious and never put yourself in danger. If you feel in danger, leave the area and call 911.

Just because something does not feel right it is not automatically a reason to report it. Often it is a series of red flags that by their preponderance would cause us to make a report. When reporting, think of what you are trying to describe as a word picture. Imagine a picture of what you are describing, and then use words to share the “picture” with local law enforcement. Describe in detail what you saw and try to leave out assumptions.

If possible, make your own written record of what you saw and when you reported it. You will be amazed at how time can change your perception of what you saw and this record may help later.

If a crime has occurred within Costa Mesa limits and there is no suspect information, you can file a report online by visiting www.costamesaca.gov/police and selecting the blue icon titled “Crime Reporting.”

Vehicle Description Form

Color:	Style (2 door, etc):	License Plate:
Make:	Model:	Year:
# of people inside vehicle	Unusual markings	Where was it last seen?
Direction of travel?	How long ago?	

Witnesses names	Address	Phone number

Comments: _____

Suspect Description Form

When reporting suspects follow this rule: Top down-outside to inside

Sex:	Race:	Age:
Height:	Weight:	Eye Color:
Glasses:	Complexion:	Hair Color:
Moustache/Beard, Sideburns:	Hat:	Shirt:
Coat:	Tie:	Pants:
Shoes:	Tattoos, scars, etc:	Accents, Speech impediments:
Gait or limp:	Weapons:	Other:

Comments: _____

**NOTE TAKING
SAMPLES**

Stay Connected

Address:

99 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Main line: 714.754.5280
Non-emergency dispatch: 714.754.5252

Website: www.costamesaca.gov/police



Social Media:

@CostaMesaPD



**CRIME TREND REPORT:
THEFT OF VEHICLE SIDE VIEW MIRRORS**



RECENT SURGE IN THEFT OF VEHICLE DRIVER AND PASSENGER SIDE VIEW MIRRORS

On Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017, a total of 13 incidents were reported throughout the day of side view mirror thefts from mainly General Motors manufactured vehicles. In all the incidents the mirror casings were left in tact and only the mirrors, valued at approximately \$400 each, were stolen. The thefts occurred throughout Costa Mesa, but the Eastside between 22nd Street and Mesa Drive saw a concentration of these thefts.

This is a significant rise from the two-month period between December 2016 and February 2017, when 11 total such incidents were reported. Most of the thefts occurred during the weekend.

TIPS TO PREVENT THESE THEFTS

- ▶ If you see someone in your neighborhood who does not belong and seems to be lingering around vehicles, be on alert and observant.
- ▶ If you see something, say something. Report a crime to CMPD immediately.
- ▶ Alert your neighbors of this crime trend.
- ▶ If possible, park your car in the garage overnight.

If you see a crime in progress, call 911.
To file a report of a crime that has occurred, call CMPD at (714) 754-5280.
You can also file a theft report online at www.costamesaca.gov/police by clicking on the blue tab titled Crime Reporting.

Example of what is posted on social media