



# MURRIETA POLICE DEPARTMENT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

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## **OVERVIEW:**

The Neighborhood Watch program is undoubtedly one of the oldest and most well known crime prevention concepts in history. While the modern day concept of Neighborhood Watch came into prominence in the late 1960's in response to an increasing burglary rate, its roots in America can actually be traced all the way back to the days of the Colonial settlements when the night watchmen patrolled the streets.

The Neighborhood Watch program has evolved into a comprehensive crime prevention program. The foundation for a successful Neighborhood Watch Program involves active participation from citizens, working in conjunction with local law enforcement. The program fosters partnerships between the community and local law enforcement with the common goal to reduce crime and maintain the quality of life of its citizens. The Neighborhood Watch program provides a vehicle for which residents can use to take an active roll in maintaining a safe community.

Law enforcement officials interact with Tract Coordinators and Block Captains, providing statistical information regarding their neighborhood and resources to help address related problems. Members of the program learn crime prevention strategies, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (C.P.T.E.D.), crime reporting techniques, identification of personal property through Operation ID, and preventative measures one could take to avoid becoming a "Victim". Additionally, local law enforcement gains valuable information regarding neighborhood problems and, as a result, can tailor their enforcement strategies to address such problems.

The Neighborhood Watch program is a new concept for the City of Murrieta and the Murrieta Police Department as a whole. Murrieta Police Department's Neighborhood Watch Program is coordinated through the Special Enforcement Team (S.E.T. Team). The S.E.T. Team is charged with the responsibility of assisting those residents interested in starting a Neighborhood Watch program in their community.

The program is comprised of five levels of responsibility with the first two levels consisting of program administration and supervision. The first level encompasses the overall command of the program, which is administered by a Murrieta Police Administrator. The Support Division Commander maintains overall command of special programs, including the Neighborhood Watch program.

The S.E.T. Team Sergeant is responsible for the second level of supervision and maintains direct supervision of the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator. The S.E.T. Team Sergeant is kept apprised of Neighborhood Watch functions, events and specific issues / problems that may arise during the course of the program.

The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator is staffed by a Police Detective assigned to the S.E.T. Team. The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator is responsible for program implementation, providing neighborhood watch

materials, neighborhood watch signs, and organizing initial tract meetings. The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator is the direct contact person for the Tract Coordinators and Block Captains.

The last two levels of the program are by far the most important to the overall success of the program. The Tract Coordinator reports directly to the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator and is, in turn, responsible to the Block Captains. Tract Coordinators recruit Block Captains within their community and delegates specific assignments to these block captains. Tract Coordinators ultimately ensure the success of their Neighborhood Watch Program by maintaining the program and utilizing the S.E.T. Team for support. The Block Captains are responsible for six to eight of their neighbors in providing crime prevention information to them once obtained from the Tract Coordinator.

Through the combined efforts of the Murrieta Police Department and the citizens of Murrieta, the Neighborhood Watch Program can be used as an effective tool to reduce crime and preserve the quality of life in our city.

### **ORGANZATIONAL STRUCTURE / RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Murrieta Police Department's Special Enforcement Team (S.E.T. Team) is responsible for the overall coordination of the program. The S.E. T. Team will provide the necessary resources to those citizens interested in starting a neighborhood watch program in their community. One member of the S.E.T. Team maintains the overall responsibility of overseeing the program and functions as the *Neighborhood Watch Coordinator*. The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator is responsible for the following:

- ⌚ Recruit tract coordinators with the use of media, City bulletins / announcements and the Internet.
- ⌚ Assist tract coordinators with setting up the Neighborhood Watch meetings and attend meetings if requested.
- ⌚ Provide necessary unit support to address specific crime problems (i.e., Code Enforcement
- ⌚ Obtain information from tract coordinators regarding specific crimes / problems they are experiencing in the neighborhood.
- ⌚ Provide fundamental information on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (C.P.T.E.D.).
- ⌚ Provide crime statistical information to the tract coordinators and solutions to address crime patterns.
- ⌚ Schedule quarterly training for all Neighborhood Watch personnel. Specialized units from the Murrieta Police Department (i.e., traffic division, code enforcement, etc.) can assist in training sessions.
- ⌚ Maintain updated telephone and mail listing of all tract coordinators.
- ⌚ Ensure all committees for the neighborhood watch program are filled.
- ⌚ Draft quarterly Neighborhood Watch newsletter.

Once an interested citizen is located, that person assumes the title of *Tract Coordinator* for their neighborhood. The Tract Coordinator is responsible for implementing the Neighborhood Watch Program in their tract with the assistance from the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator.

Tract Coordinators are responsible for the following:

- 🕒 Reporting directly to the Neighborhood Watch Program Coordinator.
- 🕒 Ensure sufficient block captains are recruited to cover the tract.
- 🕒 Maintain block captain listings and recruit / replace when necessary.
- 🕒 Coordinate with block captains to visit new move-ins and introduce new families to the neighborhood watch program.
- 🕒 Pick up newsletters from the Murrieta Police Station (the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of each quarter January/April/July/October) and ensure proper distribution of the newsletters is done by the block captains.
- 🕒 Recruit and assign the following positions as needed for the tract (have block captains assist with this process):
  - New members.
  - Vacation home checks.
  - Block parents.
  - Neighborhood patrol.
  - Fundraising.
  - Secretarial duties.
  - Developing and maintaining block maps.
  - Materials / publications distribution.
- 🕒 Ensure block captains obtain and maintain telephone listings (phone tree) of the tract with a copy of such listings given to the tract coordinator.
- 🕒 Meet with block captains at least quarterly for any problem matters, updates, or planning of any special neighborhood events (BBQ's, National Night Out, additional neighborhood meetings, etc.).
- 🕒 Ensure Neighborhood Watch signs are purchased, posted by City Public Works, and maintained by the tract members (ensure the signs are free of graffiti, vandalism, weather damage, etc.).
- 🕒 Remind block captains to report crimes or suspicious activity immediately to the police department. It is not the duty of the block captains or tract coordinators to do the reporting.
- 🕒 Ensure both residents and block captains notify the tract coordinator (for information only) of any call-out police services in the tract. This would keep the tract coordinator apprised of situations occurring within the tract.

Block Captains act as spokespersons for the group of homes assigned to them. Block Captains are responsible for the following:

- ⌚ Block Captains are assigned a certain number of homes in their tract (usually six to eight homes).
- ⌚ Report directly to their Tract Coordinator.
- ⌚ Maintain a telephone listing (tree) of all the families assigned to them.
- ⌚ Assist tract coordinator in recruiting and assignment of the following positions as needed for tract:
  - New members.
  - Vacation home checks.
  - Block parents.
  - Neighborhood patrol.
  - Fundraising.
  - Secretarial duties.
  - Developing and maintaining block maps.
  - Materials / publications distribution.
- ⌚ Remind members to call law enforcement with concerns – not the block captain or tract coordinators. The block captain's role is to assist, but not to report all problems to the police department.
- ⌚ If a resident calls the police, insure that the resident notifies the block captain or tract coordinator with the case number or incident number and a brief summary of the call.
- ⌚ Identify senior citizens and/or neighbors with health problems who need special assistance or attention. During power outages, check on their families. Find out if a family member is living off a respirator.
- ⌚ Have available emergency telephone listings for families assigned to their areas. Advise families to always call 9-1-1 for crimes in progress or life threatening situations immediately.
- ⌚ Responsible for the exchange of the following information among neighbors:
  - Home and work telephone numbers.
  - Number, ages, and names of family members or occupants.
  - Family members who are elderly, handicapped, or have special needs.
  - Work hours.
  - School or day care hours of children.
  - Family pets.
  - Planned vacations (time frames).
  - Visitors or families visiting.
  - Scheduled deliveries or repairs.

## **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION:**

The implementation of the Neighborhood Watch Program is a two-phase process. The first phase entails the initial contact by those residents interested in organizing a Neighborhood Watch Program in their community. This contact would include a meeting with the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator and the prospective Tract Coordinator. During this meeting, the Tract Coordinator would be provided with a packet that would include books, pamphlets, software, and forms necessary to begin the program. The Tract Coordinator would estimate a date and time when he/she would like to hold their first Neighborhood Watch meeting. In the interim, the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator would prepare statistical information on the particular area, and present this information during the Neighborhood Watch meeting.

The second phase of the program entails the actual Neighborhood Watch meeting. The meeting would occur in the identified neighborhood or, as an alternative, could take place in the community conference room of the Murrieta Police Department. The meetings would last approximately 45 minutes to one hour and would consist of key crime prevention topics, crime prevention tools / displays, and an open forum for crime prevention related discussions. The meeting provides an opportunity for neighbors to interact with each other, which is essential for a successful Neighborhood Watch program.

The possibility exists where a resident would only want to be a block captain and not take on the responsibility of becoming a tract coordinator. In this event, the resident could start a smaller scale version of the program encompassing their immediate area. The same two-phase process would take place and the resident would be provided with the same information and packets.

The Murrieta Police Department would announce the Neighborhood Watch Program by preparing a press release to include contact information via the Internet. It is anticipated that the implementation of the program will spark a great deal of interest and require the first phase one meeting to be held at the Murrieta Police Department.

In addition to advertising the program in the local newspaper and via the Internet, a display of pamphlets would be available in the front lobby of the Murrieta Police Department.

## **DEPARTMENTAL FORMS AND PHAMPLETS:**

The Murrieta Police Department has several forms and informational pamphlets to serve the citizens of Murrieta. These forms are distributed to Tract Coordinators through hard copies, diskette, or via the Internet. These forms include the following:

- ⌚ M.P.D. Neighborhood Watch Family Data Sheet.
- ⌚ M.P.D. Neighborhood Watch Meeting Flyer.
- ⌚ M.P.D. Neighborhood Watch Statistical Information.
- ⌚ M.P.D. Neighborhood Watch Phone Tree.
- ⌚ M.P.D. Neighborhood Watch Property Inventory.
- ⌚ M.P.D. Neighborhood Watch Block Map.

The pamphlets provided by the Murrieta Police Department cover a wide array of topics. These forms are provided to members of the Neighborhood Watch Program and are also available in the lobby of the Murrieta Police Department. These pamphlets are as follows:

- ⌚ Neighborhood Watch Program.
- ⌚ Child Safety.
- ⌚ Home Security.

- 🕒 Home Security Hardware.
- 🕒 Operation Identification.
- 🕒 Vehicle Security.
- 🕒 Personal Security.
- 🕒 Vacation Security.
- 🕒 Crime Prevention Tips For Seniors.
- 🕒 Crime Prevention Tips For The Disabled.
- 🕒 Burglary Prevention.
- 🕒 Prevent Arson And Vandalism.

## **RESOURCES:**

The following are a list of government entities and private companies who offer resources, both at cost and no cost, to law enforcement agencies interested in starting a neighborhood watch program:

- 🕒 **National Neighborhood Watch Institute**  
 P.O. Box 4208 Santa Fe Springs, Ca 90670-  
 1208 Bus: (888) 669-4872 Fax: (888) 329-6694  
 Internet: [www.nnwi.org](http://www.nnwi.org)  
 Products: Neighborhood watch signs, decals, handbooks, and work sheets.
- 🕒 **Office of Criminal Justice Planning**  
 1130 K Street, Suite 300 Sacramento, Ca  
 95814 Bus: (916) 324-9100  
 Publications: “Operation Identification”
- 🕒 **Kwikset Corporation**  
 19701 DaVinci Lake Forest, Ca 92610  
 Bus: (800) 327-5625  
 Internet: [www.kwikset.com](http://www.kwikset.com)  
 Products: Displays for law enforcement (dead bolts, etc.).