

COMMUNITY WATCH HANDBOOK



WE REMEMBER



This book is dedicated to Strategic Counterdrug Team (STAC) Agent Billy Fred Clardy III, End of Watch December 6, 2019.

As a Community Relations Officer for the North Precinct from November 15, 2010, to January 16, 2017, Billy served the area with integrity, professionalism, and dedication. Billy made everyone feel as though they mattered.

In 2015, the Huntsville Community Watch Association began presenting an award to officers who go above and beyond to improve the quality of life in the community. That award is called the Billy Fred Clardy III Community Policing Award.

Billy's sacrifice was the greatest one can give in service to others.

COMMUNITY WATCH Promotes Community!



Community Watch programs give residents a way to strengthen and secure their communities—not through vigilantism, but simply through a willingness to look out for suspicious activity in their neighborhoods and report it to law enforcement.

Community Watch encourages residents to interact with each other by exchanging information such as work schedules, vacation plans, and the types of vehicles that belong to the residents. Regular monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly meetings offer residents updated information on current crime trends and gives residents the opportunity to plan watch programs for their area.

Community Watch is one of the most effective and least expensive ways to prevent crime and reduce fear. It fights the isolation that crime creates and feeds on. It forges bonds and improves relations between officers and the community they serve.

Community Watch groups that are successful share some common traits:

- People feel a sense of ownership with the program. They invest their time and energy in it and it belongs to them.
- Law enforcement is seen as an indispensable guiding force.
- Citizens see themselves as responsible for program and choose to get involved in planning and implementation.
- Neighbors know each other.
- The program addresses the local concerns of citizens.

If you have questions or want more information about Community Watch in your area, please refer to the last page of this book for contact information.

NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME PREVENTION: A JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

Community Watch groups provide year-round volunteer support to law enforcement. Citizens become the extra "eyes and ears" of law enforcement personnel and help reduce the burden of law enforcement. The impact on crime prevention by law enforcement alone is minimal when compared to the power of private citizens working with law enforcement and each other. Because of the relationships developed with law enforcement, members of Community Watch groups are often well trained, better informed, and better prepared to take care of themselves and their neighborhoods.

Being a part of Community Watch can:

- Reduce or prevent local crime
- Reduce the fear of crime
- Address issues relating to antisocial behavior
- Create safer neighborhoods
- Build community spirit and cohesion
- Improve a community's quality of life
- Assist in detecting and apprehending criminals through members providing information to law enforcement

IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Crime feeds on apathy. If people simply "mind their own business," the entire neighborhood is vulnerable. *Is your neighborhood vulnerable?* Answer the following questions to help you determine if you need a Community Watch program:

- 1. Do you know all of your neighbors?
- 2. Do you watch your neighbor's homes when they are away?
- 3. Do your neighbors watch your home when you are away?
- 4. Do you and your neighbors work together on neighborhood problems?
- 5. If you hear or see something suspicious, do you call the police?
- 6. Is your active involvement in your neighborhood and community important?
- 7. Do you talk to the youth in your neighborhood?
- 8. Do you know what is going on in your neighborhood?

Remember:

- The security of a community and its citizens depend on the people themselves.
- You and your neighbors are the ones who really know what is going on in your neighborhood.
- No law enforcement agency can effectively protect life and property without the support and cooperation of the citizens it serves. We need your eyes and ears.
- Every citizen who is a concerned, public-spirited person who watches their neighborhood and reports criminal activity to the police should be a Community Watch member.



COMMUNITY WATCH History



The story of Huntsville Community Watch began on Jones Valley Drive in southeast Huntsville. A noticeable increase in their neighborhood's criminal activity led many of the residents to become concerned. Bob Webb and Fred Stevenson, who lived on Jones Valley Drive, often met to talk about the amount of crime that was being reported in the area. One or the other would eventually say, "We need to do something about this mess."

Over the next several weeks, Bob, Fred, and two other neighbors—Bob Reeves and Don Tomlin—met almost nightly to brainstorm and develop a plan. Thinking it wise to establish operating rules that would be compatible with police operations, they called in Officer Jerry Hammond of the Huntsville Police Department (HPD) for guidance and support.

Once the group had established operating procedures, they made arrangements with Trinity United Methodist Church to use its facility for a series of meetings to inform the community of the detailed plans for the watch program and to solicit participation. Each household was asked to attend at least one of three meetings. By the end of these meetings, 125 people had signed up to participate.

Fred Stevenson became the first coordinator for Jones Valley Community Watch. The first patrol of the new Jones Valley Community Watch was on March 9, 1979. With the help of Mayor Joe Davis and Commissioner Mike Gillespie, the new watch group got the city to erect signs that marked their neighborhood as being patrolled by Community Watch. The group continues to operate today.

Other areas of Huntsville learned about the success of the Jones Valley Community Watch and began contacting the group for help in starting their own watch groups. As more groups became established, they saw the need for a point of contact in the Huntsville Police Department to serve as a liaison. Chief Salvatore Vizzini was a week ahead of their request, having already established a new Crime Prevention Unit and assigned Officer Ben Jennings to the office. By late 1983, the Huntsville Community Watch Association was established as a single point of contact for all the watch groups in Huntsville.

Huntsville Community Watch continues to this day, providing the police department with volunteer "eyes and ears." A big "Thank you" goes out to all of our watch groups for their countless hours of volunteer service to the city of Huntsville and their community.

COMMUNITY WATCH How it Works

Each year, 10 million serious crimes—more than half of the nation's total—go unreported. The Community Watch program is simply you and your neighborhood working together with your local law enforcement to reduce criminal opportunity on your street.

Community Watch operates to educate participants in three key principles: **Deter**, **Delay**, and **Detect**. The program depends on a communication network organized with three levels of participants: residents, coordinators and block captains (where applicable), and the police.

Deter: Sound residential security practices and good locks eliminate the opportunity for an easy burglary.

Delay: A burglar wants to avoid being caught, so the longer it takes to force a door or window, the greater the risk. The burglar wants to avoid making noise—like breaking glass or smashing doors—and avoid attracting attention. It is nearly impossible to make a house or apartment impregnable, but it is relatively easy and inexpensive to make forced entry difficult. Just a four-minute delay is considered sufficient to prevent a burglar from gaining entry.

Detect: Cameras and alarms on doors and windows are some of the surest ways to detect a burglar, but having watchful neighbors alert to unusual activity who will notify law enforcement is also an effective means of detection.

Keeping in mind these three principles, you can take positive steps to decrease the likelihood that your home will be burglarized. Take time to conduct your own security check. Take time to put your house in order. Then talk to your neighbors about how you can help each other keep your entire neighborhood safe. They know you and your family, what type of car you drive, who visits your house regularly, and when you will be away. Your neighborhood could be the first to spot a burglar at your home!



How to Organize Your COMMUNITY WATCH



The need for neighbors to look out for each other is the basis of Community Watch. This program encourages and educates residents on how to act as the eyes and ears of the police department.

Eligible Groups: Any group of three or more adult individuals (from three different households) in the same geographical area can become a Community Watch Group and receive Community Watch signs to designate their participation.

Geographical Area: Residents who organize the neighborhood for the program with the help of the police department determine the geographic area of their Community Watch Group.

Getting Started: The community's organizing members and the Community Relations Officer (CRO) from the appropriate precinct meet to discuss any neighborhood concerns. The CRO then refers the organizers to the Huntsville Community Watch Association (HCWA) for help in establishing the watch group. Next, the organizers canvass as many neighbors as possible to ask them about their interest and willingness to participate, providing information supplied by the CRO and HCWA. Questions should include the following:

- Do you feel at risk of being burglarized or being the victim of other crimes?
- Have you taken any steps to protect your home?
- Are you willing to attend a meeting to organize a Community Watch group?

Finally, the CRO and HCWA meet with the group to review rules and information about membership in Community Watch. Once the group has been established, Community Watch signs are placed at the entrances to the neighborhood.

You may be surprised to learn how many of your neighbors' lives have already been touched by crime

COMMUNITY WATCH Meetings

At the first meeting:

- 1. Select a convenient time far enough in advance to give everyone adequate notice. (Please try to avoid Wednesdays, Fridays, and weekends). Most of our meetings begin at 6:00-6:30 p.m. If you prefer, we can also meet during regular business hours.
- 2. Distribute a flier announcing the meeting.
- 3. Hold the meeting in the home of a neighbor, a nearby facility, or at the precinct.
- 4. The Community Watch board member present will provide a sign-in sheet.
- 5. The Community Watch board member present will explain the concept of Community Watch and cover basic information. The board will also discuss programs offered through Community Watch.
- 6. The CRO will go over rules and things to avoid while participating in Community Watch, how to recognize suspicious activity, and how to report crime.
- 7. Provide a map of the streets you will be covering to the HCW board and the CRO.
- 8. Select a Coordinator, Co-coordinator, and block captains if the watch area covers several streets.
- 9. Select a time and place for the follow-up meeting. CROs are available to give suggestions for guest speakers and to speak to your group on topics ranging from Citizens Response to Active Shooters to Crime Prevention through Environmental Design.

Stress to all members that this is a *Community* Watch. The success of the program depends on their active participation and involvement.



COMMUNITY WATCH Roles and Responsibilities

Coordinator/Co-Coordinator

- Arrange meetings and crime prevention programs.
- Distribute material sent from the HCWA and HPD.
- Communicate with block captains where applicable.
- Receive and report information from members to the police department. (Residents may also report their concerns directly)
- Keep an updated list of active members or residents.
- Notify the HCWA of changes to Coordinator or Co-coordinator.

Block Captain (where applicable)

- Assist the Coordinator in passing information to and from residents in your area.
- Keep in touch with the Coordinator.
- Welcome new neighbors and encourage others to join your watch group.

Huntsville Police Department

- Keep the community informed of crime trends and potential problems.
- Attend meetings as requested.
- Conduct training sessions on crime prevention tips and other topics.
- Maintain contact with the Coordinator.
- Inform the precinct captains of neighborhood concerns.

Huntsville Community Watch Association

- Provide magnetic signs for groups wishing to patrol.
- Maintain contact with the Coordinator.
- Meet with watch groups as needed to address concerns.
- Provide ongoing support for watch groups.

HEAR IT! SEE IT! REPORT IT!

COMMUNITY WATCH Dos and Don'ts

Do...

- Report suspicious activity immediately to the police, not the Community Watch Coordinator.
- Report all crimes to the police.
- Learn what is normal in your neighborhood.
- Take a pro-active stance against crime.
- Encourage others to participate in Community Watch and invite new residents to join.
- Obtain full descriptions and license numbers of suspicious people and their vehicles and report them immediately to the police.
- Participate in Operation Identification.

Do NOT...

- Do not take the law into your own hands.
- Do not EVER attempt to apprehend anyone.
- Do not leave your vehicle when patrolling.
- Do not perform investigative functions such as checking doors or searching areas on foot.
- Do not become involved in high-speed pursuit of a vehicle.
- Do not shine a light at anyone or into the windows of a vehicle or occupied dwelling.
- Do not violate traffic regulations.
- Do not carry any weapons while representing yourself as a member of Community Watch or when performing Community Watch duties.
- Do not patrol under the influence of alcohol or prescription medications and drugs that may cause you to become impaired.



Benefits of COMMUNITY WATCH

The eight most important benefits of being involved in your own Community Watch Program are:

- 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, and this stimulates neighborhood awareness.
- 4. Reduces the risk of becoming a crime victim, which in turn reduces the physical, financial, and psychological costs of crime.
- 5. Instructs residents and offers continued education on how to observe and report suspicious activities in your community.
- 6. Addresses quality of life issues and mutual interests in your community.
- 7. Enhances homeland security.
- 8. Works collaboratively with other civic and community activities.



MAKE IT TOUGH



FOR THE BURGLAR

Through Community Watch Programs, determined citizens are decreasing their chances of becoming victims. Alert program participants in communities across the country are making things hard for potential criminals. Consider doing one or more of the following.

- Arrange for home security inspections by your Community Relations Officers to identify security vulnerabilities.
- Upgrade locks, security hardware, and lighting. Install alarms when security inspections show a particular hazard.
- Train family members to keep valuables secure and to lock doors and windows when leaving home. It is good practice to keep doors locked whether anyone is home or not.
- Ask neighbors to watch for suspicious activity when the house is vacant.
- Engrave valuable property with your driver's license number to discourage theft and help police identify and return stolen property.
- Make sure your windows are well secured.
- Consider adding motion lights outside your home.
- Keep bushes near windows trimmed lower than the apron of the window. Three feet or less is good.
- Thorny bushes near windows can be a great deterrent.
- Larger or older bushes that provide cover should be trimmed upward at least a foot.
- Consider laying pea gravel in beds below windows so you will be able to hear a wouldbe burglar's footsteps loud and clear.
- Nameplates on your door or mailbox should have your last name only. Do not indicate your sex or marital status.
- House numbers should be clearly visible from the street and well illuminated. This will help the police and other first responders to find your house quickly in case of an emergency.



The **Crime Prevention Triangle** is a concept which states that in order for a crime to occur, all three of the triangle's elements—desire, ability, and opportunity—must exist. If we can eliminate any one of these elements, a crime has not occurred. Let's take a quick look at each of these elements.

The desire of a criminal to commit a crime: We, as citizens, cannot affect or remove a criminal's desire to commit a crime. If someone really wants to commit a crime, he or she will.

The criminal's ability to commit a crime: We cannot affect the ability of a criminal to commit a crime. He or she will find a way. A criminal can be thousands of miles away and use telephones or the Internet. Not even physical impairment will stop some individuals from committing crimes.

The criminal's opportunity to commit crimes: This is where we can take action to prevent crime. By removing the opportunity for crime to occur, we have broken the Crime Prevention Triangle. How do we do this? By practicing the techniques learned by participating in Community Watch.





Local law enforcement needs to have accurate information as quickly as possible about suspicious activity or a crime in progress.

- Give your name, address, and telephone number. The operator will ask this to confirm the information even if you call **911**.
- Describe the event as briefly as possible.
- Describe who, what, when, where, why, and how it happened.
- Describe the suspect, if known. Details such as sex, race, age, height, weight, hair color, clothing, accent, facial hair, distinctive characteristics, and clothing are all useful to officers.
- Describe the vehicle if one was involved. Give details such as color, make, model, tag number and state, special markings, dents, or stickers. Take note of which direction it went.
- Stay on the line until the operator advises they have all the information needed.

Practicing to develop skill in providing quick and accurate descriptions is an excellent Community Watch meeting activity. In attempting to describe events, vehicles, or persons, write down the details of what you have observed while they are still fresh in your mind, so your descriptions will be as accurate as possible.



HOW TO GIVE A DESCRIPTION OF A SUSPICIOUS VEHICLE

Vehicle:

•	Body type	
•	Color	
	How many doors? Two? Four?	
•	Size? Compact/Mid-size/Luxury?	
	Plate Number? Letters/numbers?	
•	Direction of travel?	_
•	How many occupants?	
•	Description of occupants?	
•	Visible damage?	

HOW TO GIVE A DESCRIPTION OF A SUSPICIOUS PERSON

Person:

- Sex
- Race,
- Nationality/Ethnicity
- Complexion
- Age
- Height
- Weight
- Build
- Tattoos
- Eye color, eye glasses
- Hair length and color
- Clothing: type, color, style, shoes, pants, shirt; start at the top and work down
- Method and means of escape
- Was a weapon involved? Shape, color, size?



Emergency 911 Non-Emergency 256-722-7100 Option 1

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Going door to door in a residential area, especially if one or more persons goes to the rear of a house	Possible burglary	
Waiting or loitering in front of a house or business, if the business is closed or the house is unoccupied	Possible burglary	
Forcing entry into a neighbor's house	Possible burglary in progress	
Person running, especially if they are carrying something of value	Possible suspect fleeing the scene of a crime	
Foot and vehicle traffic to and from a certain residence if it occurs on a daily/regular basis	Possible drug, gang, fencing, or prostitution activity	
Person screaming	Possible assault, sexual assault, or abduction	
Person loitering around cars or going car to car and peering into them	Possible car thief, or theft from motor vehicle in progress	
Person loitering around schools, parks, or secluded areas	Possible sex offender or drug dealers	
Person offering items for sale at a low price	Possibly trying to sell stolen property	
Strangers loitering or slowly driving through a neighborhood several times	Possible burglary suspects, vandals, drug dealers, or sex offenders	
Vehicle parked near a closed business or unoccupied house and being loaded with valuables	Possible burglary or theft in progress	
Abandoned vehicle parked on your block	Possible stolen vehicle	
Adult or child being forced into a vehicle	Possible abduction or sexual assault in progress	
Someone loitering around a bank or an ATM	Robber looking for victim	
Locked vehicle that someone is attempting to forcibly enter, especially in a parking lot	Possible auto theft or theft from motor vehicle in progress	
Unusual noises such as gunshots, screaming, or continuously barking dogs	Possible burglary, assault, sexual assault	
Open or broken doors or windows at a closed business or at an unoccupied house	Possible burglary, vandalism, trespassing	
Person exhibiting unusual mental or physical symptoms	Person may be injured, under the influence of drugs, or have a medical issue	

Remember: Any of these activities could be legitimate—but if seems "suspicious" or unusual and you are concerned, CALL THE POLICE!

13 THINGS A BURGLAR WON'T TELL YOU Courtesy of Reader's Digest

- "Of course, I look familiar. I was here just last week cleaning your carpets, painting your shutters, or delivering your new refrigerator."
- "Hey, thanks for letting me use the bathroom when I was working in your yard last week. While I was in there, I unlatched the back window to make my return a little easier."
- "Love those flowers. That tells me you have taste ... and taste means there are nice things inside."
- "Yes, I really do look for newspapers piled up on the driveway."
- "If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house."
- "If decorative glass is part of your front entrance, don't let your alarm company install the control pad where I can see if it's set."
- "A good security company alarms the window over the sink. And the windows on the second floor, which often access the master bedroom—and your jewelry."
- "It's raining, you're fumbling with your umbrella, and you forget to lock your door understandable. But understand this: I don't take a day off because of bad weather."
- "I always knock first. If you answer, I'll ask for directions somewhere or offer to clean your gutters."
- "Do you really think I won't look in your sock drawer?"
- "Here's a helpful hint: I almost never go into kids' rooms."
- "You're right: I won't have enough time to break into that safe where you keep your valuables. But if it's not bolted down, I'll take it with me."



• "A loud TV or radio can be a better deterrent than the best alarm system." If you are reluctant to leave your television on while you're out of town, you can buy a device that works on a timer and simulates the flickering glow of a real television.

Remember: Any of these activities could be legitimate—but if it seems "suspicious" or unusual and you are concerned, CALL AND REPORT IT!

COMMUNITY WATCH Survey

This survey is being conducted in your neighborhood to determine if sufficient interest exists to start a Community Watch Program. The program is endorsed by the Huntsville Police Department. At least three households must be willing to participate before your neighborhood can proceed with the program. Your support is needed!

- 1. Are you in favor of a Community Watch Program in your neighborhood? Yes No
- 2. Would you consider being observant in your neighborhood as you go about your daily activities? (No intervention or physical interaction with law violators is permitted.)

Yes

No

If needed, would you consider serving as a Block Captain? (Block Captains serve as a point or contact for 5-10 homes near your residence.)
Yes
No

If you are interested in participating with the Community Watch Program, please provide the following information:

CONNECTING With Your Neighbors

- Create a neighborhood survey of assets, skills, and needs for use during crisis situations.
- Hold neighborhood game nights.
- Start a community garden.
- Host a coffee or dessert night.
- Have a neighborhood clean-up day.
- Start a community newsletter.
- Gather to watch a sporting event.
- Have a neighborhood block party.
- Have a ladies' creativity night.
- Start a book club or community lending.
- Join Nextdoor, a private social network for your neighborhood, on the web at http://www.nextdoor.com.



THINGS TO KNOW

SeeClickFix HSV Connect



Report issues such as graffiti, illegal dumping, potholes, broken parking meters, or even a found pet. Photos are helpful. Reports of a sensitive nature may be submitted confidentially. You will be notified when your issue is resolved.

Download the app on Google Play or the iTunes App Store. You can also use a computer.

Operation Identification



A burglary prevention program that involves marking of property with your Alabama Driver's License Number so that your property can be easily traced and identified as yours. Marked property is more difficult for a burglar to dispose of or resell. If a burglar is caught with marked property, it is solid evidence of possession of stolen goods.

No Soliciting window clings are available upon request. Door-to-door solicitors need a Solicitor's License to operate in the City of Huntsville.

The **Ride Along with a Police Officer** program allows citizens a behind-thescenes look at the Huntsville Police Department in action. Applications and more information can be found at <u>https://www.huntsvilleal.gov/residents/public-</u> <u>safety/huntsville-police/community-resources/ride-with-an-officer/</u>.

The 9-week **Citizens Police Academy** gives citizens first-hand information on how and why the Department operates and examines the culture of police work.

PRECINCTS





Important City Numbers

Who to Call About:

Hunterille Police 256 722 7100 Hunterille Fire and Passare 256 72		120
Noise Pollution	COH Natural Resources	256-427-5750
of Dead Animals	COH Animal Control	256-883-3788
Collection and Disposal		
Visibility Obstruction	COH Traffic Engineers	256-427-6850
Residential Area	COH Zoning	256-564-8008
Operation of a Business in a		
Parking in Residential Area	COH Zoning	256-564-8008
18 Wheelers and Motor Homes		
Open Burning	COH Fire Department	256-722-7120
Grass on Public Property	COH Landscape Management	256-427-5226
Grass on Private Property	COH Community Development	256-427-5409
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Inoperable Vehicles & Junk on Private Property	COH Community Development	256-427-5409
	COH Inspection	256-427-5331
Construction & Demolition Debris	COUL	256 427 5221
	25.9	256-427-5332
Building Permits	COH Inspection	256-427-5331
Seeping Raw Sewage	HPD	256-427-7197
Illegal Dump Sites	HPD	256-427-7197
Standards for Litter & Garbage Containers	COH Sanitation	256-883-3964
Yard Waste Collection	COH Sanitation	256-883-3964
Dumpsters Location	COH Sanitation	256-883-3964
Dumpsters Over-Flowing	HPD	256-427-7197
Ditch maintenance and Cleaning	COH Sanitation	256-883-3944
Litter in the Streets and Gutter	COH Sanitation	256-883-3944
Trash Pick-Up	COH Sanitation	256-883-3964
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Huntsville Police 256-722-7100 Huntsville Fire and Rescue 256-722-7120 Municipal Court 256-427-7803 www.huntsvilleal.gov

COMMUNITY RELATIONS UNIT

North Precinct Main Number: 256-746-4100

256-746-4104 256-427-4105

South Precinct Main Number: 256-213-4500 256-213-4548 256-213-4550

West Precinct Main Number: 256-427-7009 256-427 5209 256-427-5496

> Huntsville Community Watch HCWA2011@Yahoo.com

Police Non-Emergency Number 256-722-7100 Option #1

REMEMBER:

In an emergency, <u>always</u> call 911!

A special thank you to Officer Johnny Hollingsworth who has served as the Huntsville Police Department Liaison to the Huntsville Community Watch Association From 2010-2022. We are forever indebted to him for his invaluable guidance, advice, and unwavering support.



NOTES

