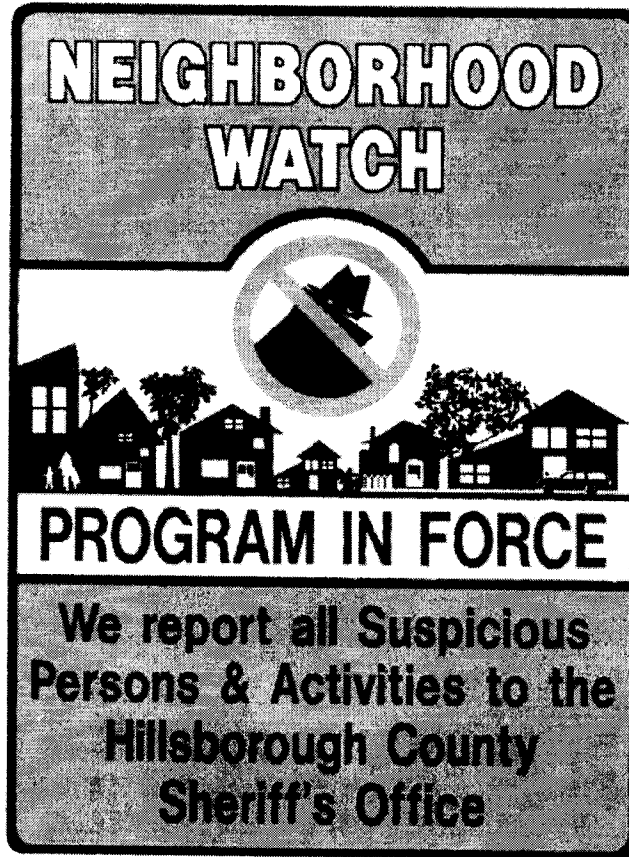


Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office



Introduction To Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch

Neighbors watching out for neighbors is a simple concept, but it forms the basis for a highly effective way for citizens like you to join with local law enforcement in the war against crime. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office encourages you to organize your neighborhood and become concerned with the betterment of your community and the welfare of your neighbors.

Throughout the nation, communities have joined together to fight the common enemy: crime! It has been said of Neighborhood Watch, that it is "a time-tested program that allows law enforcement and the community to unite in a common goal to make the community safer. This program is the cornerstone for some of the country's most successful community policing jurisdictions. If you are trying to make your community safe, one of your first steps should be to coordinate a Neighborhood Watch program".

Neighborhood Watch asks you to act as the eyes and ears for your neighbors and the Sheriff's Office by reporting suspicious activity. Citizens are encouraged to call law enforcement when they see suspicious activity in their neighborhood, to identify themselves, and to furnish whatever information is available.

The confrontation and / or apprehension of any suspicious person should be left to law enforcement officers. However, the exchange of information between citizens and law enforcement officers is a vital link in effective crime prevention.

How to set up a Neighborhood Watch Program

Determine the area where the Neighborhood Watch will be established geographically. This is preferably by subdivision, neighborhood, or complex (condominiums, town homes or apartments). Individual streets usually are not accepted unless they are totally by themselves (for example, cul-de-sacs) and apart from other areas.

Participation Agreement

Using the Participation Agreement form contained in this packet, canvass your area and obtain signatures from residents. **It is recommended that at least 50 percent of those who live in the proposed Neighborhood Watch area sign the agreement and agree to attend the first set-up meeting with a deputy from the Community Relations Section. This must be accomplished prior to taking the next step.**

Arrange a date for initial set-up meeting

After the signatures have been obtained, contact the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Community Relations Section at 247-8115 to schedule a date for a deputy from the Sheriff's Crime Awareness Team to conduct the set-up meeting. The deputy will discuss how the Neighborhood Watch Program works. The date will depend on the deputy's schedule. When requesting a date, please try to give the deputy **three to four weeks advance notice**.

Meeting location

After a date is set, you will need to arrange an indoor meeting location with adequate seating for those expected to attend. Suitable locations may include a clubhouse, church, school, or recreation center. Notify the deputy of the location.

Attendance required

When the deputy presents the program, attendance will be required by all those who initially signed up to establish Neighborhood Watch. Duties of all program participants will be explained in detail.

Coordinator, Telephone Chain, Neighborhood Watch Signs

Every Neighborhood Watch group will need at least one coordinator for their area and a block captain for every 14 to 22 block watchers on the telephone chain. The block captain will assist the coordinator in developing their respective areas.

Following the set-up program, your group can establish a telephone chain and begin active participation in Neighborhood Watch. Telephone chains **must be updated annually** and sent to the Sheriff's Office coordinator. Once your active telephone chain is received by the deputy who coordinates Neighborhood Watch, you will be eligible to post signs in your community. The first two signs are provided at no cost to your group by the Hillsborough County Neighborhood Watch Association, Inc.

Poles to install the initial signs are provided at no cost by the Hillsborough County Traffic Engineering Department. Information on how to purchase additional signs, window stickers or other Neighborhood Watch material is available by contacting the Sheriff's Office Community Relations Section.

Program requirements and costs

Each Neighborhood Watch group is required to hold one meeting per year. The Hillsborough County Neighborhood Watch Association holds meetings twice a year. Local groups are encouraged to attend those meetings. Annual dues are 25 cents per household for each residence participating. These dues go to the Hillsborough County Neighborhood Watch Association, Inc.

TELEPHONE CHAIN INSTRUCTIONS

If you see or hear suspected criminal activity:

- 1) Call the Sheriff's Office:
(911) for crimes in progress
(247-8200) for all other incidents.
Be sure to ask for the event number before hanging up.
- 2) Call the Watch Coordinator or Adjacent coordinator*. Give all pertinent information and the event number. The information will come back to you via the phone chain. Listen to ensure that the information being passed is accurate. If not, contact your Block Captain or Watch Coordinator immediately.
- 3) Call the two individuals directly beneath you on the chain*. Give all pertinent information and the event number.
- 4) If you have new information to report on the crime, call the sheriff's office and give the event number to the dispatcher so she can immediately access the information regarding the original call.

If you receive information on the telephone chain:

- 1) Write down the pertinent information and the event number.
- 2) Call the two individuals directly beneath you on the chain*. Give all pertinent information and the event number.
- 3) If you have new information to report on the crime, call the sheriff's office and give the event number to the dispatcher so she can immediately access the information regarding the original call.

*** DO NOT LEAVE MESSAGES ON ANSWERING MACHINES!** Because some individuals use their machines to screen calls, say "This is Neighborhood Watch. Please pick up the phone." Repeat this only twice. If no one picks up the phone, leave a message to include the event number and a brief description of the criminal activity. Then hang up and call the person(s) who fall beneath that individual on the phone chain.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
ASSOCIATION, INC.

Helpful Phone Chain Hints

1. The phone chain is for **NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH** purposes only!
2. Conduct a test of the phone chain to be sure all numbers are correct and that information from the beginning makes it to the end of the list.
3. When receiving information from the phone chain, be sure to write it down. Always keep a pen and paper near the phone. When you pass on information, remind those receiving it to also write the information down.
4. When you initiate the information on the phone chain, the information that you gave to the Sheriff's Office and your Neighborhood Watch Coordinator should come back to you via the phone chain. Please listen to ensure that the information being passed is accurate. If it is not correct, please advise your Neighborhood Watch Coordinator immediately.
5. For any incident that is reported to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office it is imperative that you remember to obtain the **EVENT NUMBER**. The operators do not necessarily offer that information so you must request it. The reason is quite simple. As the information is being passed to the block watchers, it is possible that one of the block watchers may observe the suspect change location. This new information is very important to the deputy(s) responding to the scene and they need to receive it from the dispatcher as quickly as possible. To efficiently accomplish this, it is of utmost importance that you give the **EVENT NUMBER** to the dispatcher when calling in new or updated information to the dispatcher so they can immediately access the information regarding the original call.
6. **Keep your phone chain near the phone at all times.** One of the best recommendations is to keep your phone chain taped to the inside of a kitchen cabinet door that is closest to the phone. Once the chain has been activated, you do not want to slow the communications line by having to first stop and find your phone list. Time is of the essence so be brief, thorough and accurate.
7. If any of this information regarding the telephone communication chain is still unclear to you, please do not hesitate to call your Neighborhood Watch Coordinator or Block Captain for further assistance. It is **extremely important** that you understand how the phone chain works. If you have older children in your home, it is a good idea to explain Neighborhood Watch and the phone chain to them in case they are the only ones home when a Neighborhood Watch call comes in.

Additional Information/Web Sites

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office: <http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us>

Hillsborough County Neighborhood Watch Association: <http://www.hcnwa.org/>

This Neighborhood Watch packet can be downloaded from either website as a PDF file.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE NEIGHBORHOOD TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION CHAIN

NOTE:
Dial 911 for in progress crimes.
All others, Call Dispatch @ #247-8200
and get the event #.

Sheriff's Office
247-8200
911

Watch Coordinator

Adjacent Coordinator

DATE: _____

Block Captain

Block Captain

Block Captain

