

Congratulations on taking the first steps to initiate a Neighborhood Watch in your area! Our goal is to keep this as simple and effective as possible.

I have included everything in this packet that you need to generate interest and hold your first meeting. Let's talk about how to get started!

**Step #1:** The **"Why a Neighborhood Watch"** sheet will be used to contact your neighbors and inform them that you want to get a Watch going in your neighborhood. You will need to include your name and contact information on this sheet, make copies, and distribute them to your neighbors. You may notice that there are places for two names. If you can enlist a second neighbor, you can cover more ground and get the word out more effectively. Here are a couple tips for handing out flyers:

- For the sake of safety, don't go door to door alone.
- It's best to try to catch people when they are home so you can have a face to face conversation.
- If you have to leave a flyer, leave it in a door. Putting them in the mailbox is illegal.

**Step #2:** Within a week or so of handing out the initial flyer, set a place, date, and time (plan for an hour) that works to have your first meeting and distribute the **"Neighborhood Watch Kick Off Meeting"** invitation. When setting a meeting time and location remember:

- Try to tailor it to when most people can be there. If you aren't sure, weekend afternoons are probably the best option. Try to steer clear of popular nights for other activities. Ex. Wednesday nights are usually church nights, Fridays are typically high school sports...etc.
- Pick a place that has seating: a garage or backyard with lawn chairs is great because it is easy to get to. If you need a bigger (or warmer) space, you could contact a religious organization or the library to see if they have meeting rooms available.

Distribute these in the same way you did the initial flyer. Don't worry if you don't get a lot of feedback. You will probably have some neighbors just show up, and you'll have some that say they'll come but don't make it. It's not uncommon to have a small group to start. Once you start communication, other neighbors will gain interest and your group will grow.

\*Make sure you contact Jeanette Potter about your meeting. She can arrange it so that either she or one of the community resource officers is present for at least a portion of the meeting. She will be keeping track of where all the Neighborhood Watches are, and will be in touch with the leaders to help provide them with communication from the police department as well as providing useful information and resources to help keep the watches active and effective.

**Step #3:** Plan and hold your meeting. Plan to have an agenda and stick to it as much as possible to avoid wasting time. Here is an example:

- Welcome and introductions. Have participants say their name, where they live, and maybe one other interesting thing about themselves.
- Explain the reason for calling the meeting and go around the room and have everyone name something they are concerned about when it comes to crime in your neighborhood.
- Pass around the **contact sheet (included in packet)** on which everyone will write their name, address, phone #, email, and preferred method of communication. (Please make sure you respect this when contacting.) It might be useful to designate one person to each type of communication.

(ex. Julie takes emails, Shawn takes phone calls, and Jeanette takes texts) The contact information should be put on a block map to be distributed later.

- Determine date for your next meeting, who will bring refreshments (keep these simple and inexpensive!) Keep in mind that a facility may need at least a month's notice prior to a meeting. Meetings should be held at least once every 90 days. Don't go more than 6 months without a meeting.
- Introduce Jeanette Potter (Safe Communities Coordinator) and/or the law enforcement officer in attendance. The topic of this meeting will be Neighborhood Watch basics.
- Make a list of topics attendees are interested in hearing about for future meetings.

**Step #4:** Take the information gathered at the meeting and create your contact lists. Once they are set up, you are ready to communicate with your neighborhood!

Jeanette will periodically send information to the Watch leaders to keep conversations going within neighborhoods as well as any information the police department would like to distribute to the public.

Enjoy getting to know your neighbors and working together for a safer Fort Dodge and surrounding areas!

If you have any questions please feel free to reach out!

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