



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Community Training

Instructor's Book



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COURSE OVERVIEW: REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Summary: Over the past thirty years, Neighborhood Watch has enhanced public safety by creating community-based partnerships to fight crime and improve the quality of neighborhood life. In a continuing effort to promote professionalism in law enforcement and to build positive policy/community relations, the National Sheriffs' Association, in cooperation with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, is producing and distributing Neighborhood Watch Toolkits to law enforcement agencies across the nation.

This training is designed to build the capacity of law enforcement officers assigned to work with Neighborhood Watch groups by providing specific instruction on each of the sixteen courses presented in the Neighborhood Watch Toolkit.

This course will increase participants' skill levels by teaching them the proper utilization of the tools and the most effective methods of maximizing the course's value for themselves and their communities.

Time Allocated: 1 hour

Method of Instruction: This presentation will utilize adult learning methodologies including standard lecture, facilitated discussion and participant-based activities. Interactive discussion is encouraged, and activities are an integral component of this course. The training is displayed by PowerPoint presentation found on the Neighborhood Watch Toolkit Community CD. Tools and handouts can be found on the CD or in the appendix of this Handbook. The handouts and/or tools used in this training are:

- Reporting Pinwheel.

Instructional Resources Required:

- Facility: sufficient seating and tables for all participants
- Equipment: Presentation, Computer, LCD Projector, Screen
- Materials: Guide and Participant Book; Flip Chart for instructor and for each table or small group; blank paper and writing utensils for each participant

Terminal Learning Objectives: Participants will learn what suspicious activities are, what to report, how to report, and how to increase awareness of suspicious activities.

PARTNERS

This training is brought to you by the National Sheriffs' Association in cooperation with a grant provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U. S. Department of Justice.

The NW Toolkit was designed and produced by the Community Safety Institute.

Before we begin the course, let's take a few moments to introduce ourselves to one another. My name is _____.

Instructor's Note:

All participants should introduce themselves by providing their name, agency and level of expertise with Neighborhood Watch. Please limit each introduction to no more than two minutes. Throughout the course during interactive discussions and activities, we will learn more about the participants and their work with Neighborhood Watch groups and volunteers within their communities.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Thank you for attending this Neighborhood Watch meeting. The topic for today is "Reporting Suspicious Activities."

For over three decades, one of the cornerstones of Neighborhood Watch has been the reporting of suspicious activities and individuals to the police. Over the years, citizen volunteers have stopped countless crimes and saved lives by becoming actively involved in protecting their communities through Neighborhood Watch. As the additional "eyes and ears" of law enforcement, Block Captains and their volunteers can help to reduce crime, improve safety and increase the quality of neighborhood life by knowing what to report and how to report it.

Slide #1



Slide #2



Slide #3



Reporting Suspicious Activities

Course Objectives

- Participants will learn to identify what suspicious activities are
- Participants will learn what types of suspicious activities and suspicious individuals to report to the police
- Participants will learn how to report suspicious activities

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, participants will learn:

- To identify suspicious activities
- What types of suspicious activities and suspicious individuals to report to the police
- How to report suspicious activities

Now more than ever, with Neighborhood Watch's new emphasis on both crime and terrorism awareness, citizens are needed to come forward and provide valuable information. Remember: don't be shy – your job is simply to report, and law enforcement will take your call seriously and check out the situation. What you see and report may be invaluable and may save lives.

Slide #4



Reporting Suspicious Activity

Confused about what to report?



WHAT IS A SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY?

Sometimes it can be confusing about what to report and when to report it.

What exactly **is** a suspicious activity?

Slide #5



Suspicious Activities are...

- Suspicious activity can refer to incidents, events, individuals or circumstances that seem unusual or out of place.

Remember:
A quick and accurate description of events, vehicles, and persons can make all the difference in apprehending a potential criminal. Any type of activity or circumstance that seems unusual should be reported.

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES ARE...

Suspicious activities can refer to incidents, events, individuals, or any activity that seems unusual or out of place.

Common suspicious activities include:

- A stranger loitering in your neighborhood
- A vehicle cruising the streets repeatedly
- Someone peering into cars or windows
- A high volume of traffic going to and coming from a home on a daily basis
- Someone loitering around schools, parks or secluded areas
- Strange odors coming from a house or building
- Open or broken doors and windows at a closed business or unoccupied residence
- Someone tampering with electrical, gas or sewer systems without an identifiable company vehicle or uniform

- Sounds of breaking glass; gunshots; screaming or fighting
- Strangers removing license plates or loading valuables into vehicles from a residence, even if the moving truck looks legitimate

Remember: a quick and accurate description of events, vehicles, and persons can make all the difference in apprehending a potential criminal. Any type of activity or circumstance that seems unusual should be reported.

ACTIVITY: WHAT TO REPORT

What are some examples of each of the categories shown? Take a few moments to write down your answers.

Some possible answers are:

- Suspicious activities: two men with a camera videotaping in a secured area such as a water treatment plant.
- Illegal activities: crimes in progress such as theft or vandalism.
- Unusual events or incidents: large crowds gathered in unusual locations.
- Dangerous situations: trees obscuring needed view of roadway or traffic signs.

REPORTING PERSONS

When reporting suspicious persons, provide as much detail as possible. Start with the basics and get more specific. One reliable method to consistently make good suspect descriptions is to begin at the head and work your way down.

For example: “He was a white male with blond hair. He was wearing a brown shirt, blue jeans and sneakers.” or “She was a black female about twenty years old, short hair, thin build and wearing a red cotton dress and sandals.”

Here’s a list of items you can describe when providing a suspect’s description:

- Gender
- Race
- Age
- Height and weight
- Hair color and style

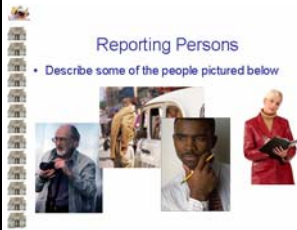
Slide #6



Slide #7



Slide #8



- Complexion
- Speech
- Scars
- General appearance
- Clothing

ACTIVITY: REPORTING PERSONS

Let's describe a couple of the people pictured here. Remember to start at the head of the person and work your way down.

Use the descriptors listed on the previous slide.

Slide #9



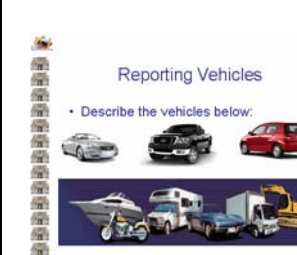
REPORTING VEHICLES

When reporting suspicious vehicles, provide as much information as possible about the vehicle, its occupants, the license plate or any identifying marks or characteristics, its activities, and direction of travel. If you have a paper and pen or pencil handy, write down the information so that you can read it to the police.

Review this list of factors to report:

- Make (Ford, Chevrolet, Honda)
- Model (Escort, Impala, pickup truck)
- Year
- Color
- License plate number and state
- Bumper stickers, damage or dents, lettering
- Direction of travel ("east on State Street")
- Occupants ("one male and one female, high school age")

Slide #10



ACTIVITY: REPORTING VEHICLES

Let's describe a couple of the vehicles pictured here. Remember that giving a quick and accurate description can help stop or solve a crime.

Use the descriptors listed on the previous slide.

REPORTING LOCATIONS

When reporting locations of suspicious activities, provide as much information as possible. An exact location or specific address is always best if possible.

To assist law enforcers in responding to your request:

- Provide exact address if possible
- Provide cross streets or closest major intersection
- In rural areas provide county road numbers or mile markers along state or federal highways.
- Provide landmarks that can be recognized by law enforcers or emergency responders
- Describe the location with as much detail as possible

REPORTING POSSIBLE TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

Since September 11, 2001, the federal government has issued heightened states of alert for local law enforcement and has urged Americans to remain vigilant for the threat of new terrorist activities.

Even when the country is not under alert, residents should increase awareness of their surroundings and report suspicious activities to local law enforcement. Some specific examples of terrorist activities to be aware of and to report can be easily remembered with the acronym “**DAD SITS.**” These activities include:

Deploying assets – placing people or objects in place to commit an act of terrorism.

Acquiring supplies – Purchasing or stealing vehicles, weapons, supplies, uniforms, identification or instruction manuals

Dry run – placing people or assets in place to practice or prepare for an attack.

Slide #11



Reporting Locations

- Provide exact address if possible
- Provide cross streets or closest major intersection
- In rural areas, provide county road numbers or mile markers along state or federal highways
- Provide landmarks that can be recognized by law enforcers or emergency responders
- Describe the location with as much detail as possible

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Reporting Possible Terrorist Activities

- Deploying assets – placing people or objects in place to commit an act of terrorism
- Acquiring supplies – Purchasing or stealing vehicles, weapons, supplies, uniforms, identification or instruction manuals
- Dry run – placing people or assets in place to practice or prepare for an attack

Slide #14



NOTE: There is nothing “wrong” in this picture. Allow the class to look and discuss factors such as the delivery truck, or the multiple vans pictured in the one-block area.

Slide #15



Surveillance – Individuals recording or monitoring activities using cameras, binoculars or other devices, or making extensive notes, drawings or diagrams.

Intelligence gathering – attempting to find out information regarding security or safety measures in place.

Tests of security – attempts to breach or probe security measures’ response capabilities.

Suspicious persons – people who seem out of place, or who don’t belong in a specific work area.

ACTIVITY: REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Look at this picture. What, if anything, is suspicious, and why?

The key here is to become aware of one’s surroundings and to notice when circumstances are unusual. We do not want our citizens to be paranoid, but we do want them to be aware, to be involved, and to be prepared.

HOW TO REPORT

Citizens and Neighborhood Watch volunteers should know how to report suspicious activities. The process should be easy and user-friendly.

To report suspicious activities, crimes in progress, or possible terrorist activities, simply:

- Dial 9-1-1 and call the police department or Sheriff’s office.
- Tell the call taker what happened and the exact location of the occurrence.
- Provide a detailed description of individuals or vehicles.
- Remain on the phone and stay calm.
- Be prepared to answer follow-up questions.

AWARENESS

You need to be aware of your surroundings and any potential hazards. Such hazards can include everything from overgrown trees that obstruct views for traffic or pedestrians, to areas that are dark and provide hiding places, to dangerous situations.

Be prepared to remove yourself from situations that might present potential hazards.

ACTIVITY: KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Let's discuss what some of the hazards might be at the locations pictured on the slide.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the course on Reporting Suspicious Activities. As participants, you should now be able to identify suspicious activities, know what to report, and how to report it.

A good tool to use when you think you might need to report a suspicious activity is the Reporting Pinwheel. The Pinwheel will help remind you what to look for, and how to report.

If an incident, vehicle, or circumstance seems out of place or unusual or makes you feel uncomfortable, do not hesitate to call the police and report it. Let law enforcement make the decision on what response to take. **Your responsibility as a concerned citizen is to help the police help you.**

REGISTER TODAY!

To take advantage of Neighborhood Watch online services such as manuals, articles on current events, and other resources, register your Neighborhood Watch group at www.USAonwatch.org.

Slide #16



Awareness

- Know your location at all times
- Be aware of the people around you
- Notice your immediate environment
- Do not take unnecessary risks
- Know where exits are located
- Recognize potential hazards
- Be prepared to remove yourself and others from harm


Slide #17



Know Your Surroundings

Four small images illustrating potential hazards: a person holding a flashlight in a dark area, a person looking at a map, a person looking at a phone, and a person looking at a sign.

Slide #18



Reporting Suspicious Activities

If an incident, individual, vehicle or circumstance seems out of place or unusual or makes you feel uncomfortable, do not hesitate to call the police and report it. Let law enforcement make the decision on what response to take. Your responsibility as a concerned citizen is to help the police help you.

Show the Reporting Pinwheel found on the NW Toolkit CD.

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Register Today



www.USAonwatch.org

