



July 2004

Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's Topic of the Month

The MCPA strives to bring current information regarding prevention topics to its members. Please feel free to use these resources within your own community. Great for newsletters, emails or news release.

Topics for the Month: National Night Out and Promoting Neighborhood Watch Including Reporting Suspicious Activity and Homeland Security

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

- Contact the MN National Night Out co-chairs with questions and ready to implement ideas shared at round tables this year (Kim Kiley, Blaine Police, 763-785-6186 or Pam Langton, St. Paul Police, 651-266-5625).
- Spread the word of NNO to current Neighborhood Watch groups to plan an event for Tuesday, August 3rd.
- Use events on NNO to "sell" Neighborhood Watch and other prevention programs.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Neighborhood Watch is a cooperative effort between the local law enforcement agency and individual neighborhoods. Neighborhood Crime Watch is simply you and your neighbors watching out for one another. This begins with getting to know each other. Otherwise, how can you tell a neighbor from a stranger?

It is important that citizens become the eyes and ears of the police by reporting suspicious activity that is not a part of the neighborhood's routine. This is explained at an initial Neighborhood Watch meeting along with the minimal criteria for the program: 1) Active participation of at least 50% of the Watch area residents 2) Participation in Operation Identification 3) Meetings at least twice a year (one educational, one social on [National Night Out](#)).

What's in it for the citizens? Greater awareness of crime including home security and personal safety. Exposure to crime prevention techniques and special events such as National Night Out enhances a citizen's ability to reduce opportunities for criminal acts. Enhanced reporting of suspicious activity makes residents more aware of who belongs in their neighborhood and are more inclined to report suspicious persons and activities to the police. Neighborhood Crime Watch signs serve as a warning to potential criminals that residents are concerned about crime and will call the police when suspicious activity is observed. Promotes Neighborliness by encouraging residents to get to know and interact with their neighbors, including exchanging information concerning vacation plans, vehicles belonging to their household, etc. It also encourages people to be observant of their neighborhood and to attend meetings designed to strengthen neighborhood safety and security. People feel safest, or at least more comfortable, in settings in which they are familiar.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

The time it takes to respond to a crime in progress is a determining factor in the apprehension of a criminal. A delay in reporting a crime by a couple of minutes greatly reduces law enforcement effectiveness. It is better to call in a few mistakes than to have one person become a victim of a crime. State clearly what kind of assistance is

needed (police, fire or medical) and stay on the phone to answer all of the questions of the dispatcher. Remain calm. Emergency calls are prioritized according to the degree that persons or property are being threatened.

- Call **911** for emergency situations and post non-emergency number for all other situations

Resources:

- ✓ NCPC in the 2004 calendar has a brochure on *What Teens Can Do Against Terrorism* for reprint.
 - ✓ Check out the MCPA web site at www.mncpa.net for other resources