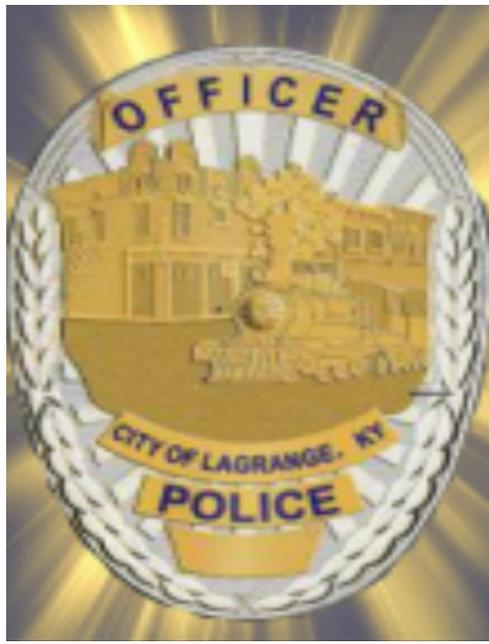


**LA GRANGE POLICE
DEPARTMENT'S**

**BLOCK WATCH
HANDBOOK**



Introduction

The Block Watch Handbook was created to provide a written guide for citizens and officers in the set up and operation of a Block Watch. This handbook cannot provide all the answers but it can help the community and the police work toward a common goal. The success of a Block Watch is directly related to the ongoing participation and support from each member of the watch.

What is a Block Watch? Each day crime and the fear of crime threatens communities. Residents change their plans and lifestyles based on the fear of going out after dark. Parents and children are afraid to use local parks where criminals meet and businesses refuse to put shops in areas they believe are unsafe. It often seems as if nothing can be done to make neighborhoods safer places. The Block Watch can help solve these problems.

Today, community policing allows the police and residents to work together to solve issues involving crime and social concerns in their community. Block watches are one of the original foundations of community policing and are referred to as “the eyes and ears of law enforcement”. Members look out for neighbors and their property and report suspicious activities to the police. However, block watches are more than looking out for suspicious activity in neighborhoods. Through community mobilization, neighbors, businesses, co-workers and students form an active partnership in the community. Watches allow individuals the opportunity to discover common interests and goals that they share with their neighbors. The residents work to prevent the possibility of crime in their area and develop a sense of community spirit that encourages more activism.

Can I Begin a Block Watch?

Q. Does a Block Watch already exist in my neighborhood?

A. To find out, contact the La Grange Police Department 502-225-0444.

Q. To start a Block Watch, do problems have to exist in my neighborhood?

A. No, a Block Watch can be formed to prevent problems.

Q. Can local associations help form a more effective Block Watch in my area?

A. Yes, local associations, churches and synagogues, civic organizations and youth/senior citizen groups are great resources for support as you begin a Block Watch. Use these groups for expertise and guidance and in return, offer them ideas and any resources that will assist them in their community efforts.

Organizing a Block Watch

Once you've contacted the La Grange Police Department for information, an officer assigned to your neighborhood will help you make plans for your first meeting. Use the following suggestions to get residents interested in attending meetings and to transform your group into a successful Block Watch.

- I. Neighbors can be invited by telephone or going door-to-door with flyers at least ten days in advance. Flyer information should include the location, date, time and purpose.
- II. If you distribute flyers, go with another neighbor and try to speak with residents to encourage them to come to the meeting. Ask them if they'd like a phone call as a reminder before the meeting and, if so, get their number before you leave.
- III. Invite any individuals or groups in the area who would have an interest in attending. Schools and businesses, churches, civic groups and local government leaders all have an investment in the health of the community and will often become active partners with block watches that are working to improve their neighborhoods.
- IV. Survey neighbors when you invite them to the first meeting to get a sense of the concerns that they have for their area. Ask them a few brief questions then make those a part of the agenda for the meeting.
- V. Draft a simple agenda and give residents a copy at the meeting. An agenda will help members focus on the issues they first raised in response to the survey. If an issue is raised that is not on the agenda, write it down for discussion at your next meeting.
- VI. Check the meeting room to make sure that you have what you'll need for speakers and presentations. If audio-visual equipment will be used, know how it operates before the meeting begins. Have a flip chart or blackboard, paper, markers and pens available so members can take notes.
- VII. Keep the meeting brief and focused. Sixty to 90 minutes is a good length of time for block watch meetings. People will also be more likely to participate if the meeting starts and ends on time.
- VIII. Distribute duties so one person is not doing all the work. Divide bigger jobs into smaller tasks so that the members do not get burned out.
- IX. Write down the names of those attending along with addresses and day and evening telephone numbers. This list will help members stay in contact and can be used to create a phone tree.
- X. Schedule meetings once a month and hold them on the same day.

Roles and Responsibilities of a Block Watch Member

The Block Watch Coordinator is the guide for the Block Watch. It is the responsibility of the coordinator to ensure that all participants are notified of upcoming meetings by the use of the phone tree system. The coordinator will also contact the police if an officer is needed for a meeting.

- I. Role of a Block Watch Member: In order to maintain the sanctity of a neighborhood and the structure of a Block Watch, there are 4 objectives Block Watch members should practice:
 - A. Be the eyes and ears of law enforcement and be able to react to activity and suspicious persons without confrontation.
 - B. Teamwork - neighbors working together can solve problems.
 - C. Practice personal safety and security while out in the community.
 - D. Attend Block Watch meetings on a regular basis.

II. Organizational Structure

A. Block Watch Coordinator

1. Leads meetings.
2. Coordinates information with the police.
3. Delegates duties among captains and members.
4. Develops agendas and finds guest speakers for meetings.

B. Block Watch Captain

1. Performs all the duties of a member.
2. Assists the coordinator in performing their duties.

C. Block Watch Member

1. Attends meetings.
2. Works with other members on common goals.
3. Looks after residences when neighbors are away.
4. Supports the captain and coordinator in accomplishing goals.
5. Reports suspicious and criminal activity to Police Dispatch at 502-222-0111 or call 9-1-1

- III. Phone Tree: At each Block Watch meeting, an assigned person will gather the sign-in sheet and produce an updated phone tree. It is very important that all members of the Block Watch receive this phone tree on a regular basis from the coordinator. All members are responsible for informing the Block Watch coordinator of any information changes that occurred. A member may request that his/her name and address be removed from the Block Watch phone tree at any time.

- IV. Training: All training issues will be decided by the Block Watch as a whole but the coordinator will make the requests. A Block Watch may refer to an outside source to obtain training on any issue at any time.

- V. Problem Solving: The practice of solving neighborhood issues and concerns is the responsibility of all involved with the organization. No one person should take it upon himself/herself to resolve all issues all the time. This is a team concept, let's use the entire team. The following procedures may help in resolving issues:
 - A. Identify concerns
 - B. Prioritize
 - C. Recognize underlying causes
 - D. Create a plan
 - E. Act upon decisions
 - F. Evaluate results

- VI. Crime Statistics: The La Grange Police Department can provide the previous month's crime statistics for a neighborhood but that information is not supposed to be copied, altered or given out too other groups.

- VII. Block Watch Signs: The block watch signs are to be purchased by the block watch group and are the property Block Watch group. La Grange City works will post the signs once they are purchased by each block watch group.

The Role of Law Enforcement

With training and guidance from a La Grange Police Officer, a Block Watch can be transformed from a group of isolated individuals into a united and committed team working on safety concerns in their neighborhood and community. The officer assigned to the neighborhood plays an essential role in the creation and development of effective Block Watches. They are trained to serve as the vital communication link between the law enforcement officers and the community. In addition, they help residents problem-solve to prevent crime and resolve community issues.

Training:

An important role of the officer is to help educate and train residents in crime prevention and offer training on topics of interest to members and their specific neighborhood.

- A. Block watch Procedures
- B. Personal Safety
- C. Residential Safety
- D. Problem Solving
- E. Others

Support:

The police officer contributes constructive support and motivates members as they form their watch. Later, the officer will work with members by answering questions and offering information on ways to mobilize with other community groups to achieve lasting results. Members utilize the support of the officer beyond the initial meetings as they tackle group goals.

Guidance:

The police officer guides members as they set up their watches. During meetings they help members focus discussions on specific ways to solve neighborhood problems and use each member's skills and talents to achieve set goals.

Leadership:

The police officer acts as an advisor contributing technical expertise and encouraging active participation from members. The challenge is to help members gain enough momentum so that they can eventually function on their own as a team.