



# YORKVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER

June 2010

## Revitalizing Your Neighborhood Watch

When a Neighborhood Watch group is first formed, there is a lot of enthusiasm for connecting with neighbors and working together to provide a safe neighborhood. But as time goes on, it can be difficult to keep that same level of enthusiasm. There are many ways you can revitalize your Neighborhood Watch group and several resources are available to you.

### History

In 1972, the Neighborhood Watch program was first formalized by the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA). At that time, crime was on the rise and this was a great way for law enforcement to partner with its citizens. As times have changed, the role of Neighborhood Watch has also changed. In 2002, the NSA partnered with USA Freedom Corps, Citizen Corps and the U.S. Department of Justice to expand the role of Neighborhood Watch to also include emergency preparedness and response. As part of this partnership, a new website, [www.usaonwatch.org](http://www.usaonwatch.org), was created to assist groups set and meet new goals.

### Roles of Neighborhood Watch

Your Neighborhood Watch group can be as much or as little as you make it. From the police department's perspective, we are

here to help guide you in forming a group, providing education opportunities through means such as newsletters and block captain meetings, and providing support for your group as needed. We strive to keep lines of communication between the police department and the neighborhood watch areas open, as communication in both directions benefits everyone. Above all, we want to promote a sense of neighborhood unity and awareness; the reason the program was so effective when it was started.

How active your group is depends on how active the individual members of your group wish to be. Some areas may have regular meetings to keep in contact with group members. Others may be available to disseminate information through their telephone tree, but not participate in additional activities. Still others may go the extra step and find other ways to be active in the community, such as arranging neighborhood clean-up days, volunteering together at community events or participating in other activities.

### Ideas for Revitalization

If it has been awhile since your group last had a Neighborhood Watch meeting or party, now is a great time to plan one. Contact your captain and offer to assist them in planning a neighborhood

get-together. Having a meeting, especially if you haven't had one in awhile, is a good way to meet new neighbors, update telephone tree lists and talk to each other about problems in your neighborhood. If you are a newer group, or have a lot of new members, a meeting is also a good opportunity to remind everyone how to report suspicious activity in the neighborhood, how the telephone tree works and other important information.

If you would like an officer to come and speak with your group, contact the police department ahead of time to arrange this. We also have picnic tables, garbage cans and barricades for use by Neighborhood Watch groups for block parties.

After talking to your group members, you may find that crime is not the largest concern in your neighborhood. Instead, maybe something such as litter in your neighborhood park is. Use your meeting as an opportunity to plan a day to clean up the park or other service project.

Don't let interest die after the meeting. Find out what you can do to help your block captain hold regular meetings, organize service projects or work towards the goals that your group has set for your neighborhood. Use the resources available online such as at [www.usaonwatch.org](http://www.usaonwatch.org) to help give you ideas to keep your group active.

## Keeping Sidewalks Clear

We would like to ask everyone to make sure to keep their sidewalks clear of obstructions. In addition to Yorkville's local ordinance stating that no person, on any sidewalk shall "do any unnecessary act or thing thereon so as to obstruct its free and quiet use and passage" (5-3-2-4), Illinois law also prohibits the stopping, standing or parking of vehicles on sidewalks [625 ILCS 5/11-1303(a)(1)(b)].

Many people use their neighborhood sidewalks, whether it be for taking the family pet for a walk or going for an early morning run. Vehicles parked over the sidewalk often force people to walk out into the street to get around them. As people try to quickly step around the obstruction, they may not be paying attention to passing traffic. Especially when visibility is poor, such as low lighting conditions at dusk or dawn, a passing vehicle may not see the pedestrian as they step out into the roadway.

This type of use is the main reason why we cite vehicles parked on the sidewalk during the day or night. While few people may be walking on the sidewalks in the middle of the night, a vehicle that is left parked over the sidewalk at 5pm in the evening may become an obstruction to the person jogging at 5am the next morning. Vehicles violating this law are typically issued an ordinance citation with a fine of \$25.

In addition to parked vehicles, toys, lawn care equipment and other items left on the sidewalk can also be obstructions. In the winter, accumulated snow and ice can become hazards as well. Please take a moment each day to make sure the sidewalk in front of your residence is clear. Your neighbors will appreciate your effort.

## Administrative Business Hours

As a reminder, our administrative offices are open from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday and are closed for all city holidays. During business hours, we are able to provide services such as fingerprinting, receiving payments and handling requests for records.

If you are unable come into the office during business hours, but need to make a payment for an ordinance citation, we can also take payments by mail or using the E-Pay service online at [www.ypdevpay.com](http://www.ypdevpay.com). Please allow up to two business days for online payments to be processed. If you need to request copies of records, we can also accept written requests through mail or e-mail at [PoliceFOIA@yorkville.il.us](mailto:PoliceFOIA@yorkville.il.us).

If you come to the police department after hours and need to speak to an officer, use the red phone located next to the main doors to request an officer to assist you. Police officers are on duty twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

## Vacation Safety

With summer nearly here, many people will soon be headed out of town for vacation. Taking these few steps before you leave and while you are on vacation will help to protect yourself and your property.

### Before Leaving

- Arrange to have a neighbor or someone else you trust check on your residence while you are gone.
- Stop your mail and newspaper or have someone pick them up daily.
- For extended trips, arrange for someone to mow your lawn.
- Put your lights on timers, especially in the rooms you are normally in. If you don't have timers, they are inexpensive to

purchase and easily found at your local home improvement store.

- Give your family or close friend a copy of your itinerary, including information for places you will be staying at in case of emergency. Let them know when you leave and when you return home.
- Call the police department at 630-553-4340 to be put on the vacation watch list. You will be asked the dates you are planning on being gone, descriptions of any vehicles that may be left in your driveway, locations of any lights you will be leaving on and the names and contact information for any key-holders to your residence.

### While on Vacation

- Remember to lock your vehicle doors and keep valuables out of sight., including items such as GPS's and cell phones.
- If you're traveling to a location you've never been to before, make sure to plan your route and bring maps with you. Even if you are using a GPS, it is good to bring back-up maps with you.
- Lighten your purse or wallet. If there are credit cards you will not be using on your trip, leave them at home.

### Newsletter Ideas

Is there a specific topic you would like to see covered or question you would like addressed in the Neighborhood Watch Newsletter? Please contact us and let us know what information would benefit you!

Please encourage your fellow Neighborhood Watch members to read the newsletter each month. Current and past issues are available at [www.yorkville.il.us](http://www.yorkville.il.us). To read them, go to Departments > Police > Neighborhood Watch.