

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH MANUAL



**USAG STUTTGART POLICE  
DEPARTMENT**

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# **ORGANIZING A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH**

## **PURPOSE**

To standardize Neighborhood Watch information presented during community crime prevention meetings. The information is designed to assist Department personnel conducting Neighborhood Watch meetings and to impart basic crime prevention techniques to help communities enjoy a greater degree of safety and security.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Neighborhood Watch programs are the most effective means available for keeping crime out of neighborhoods. It relies on the best crime fighting tool ever invented... a good neighbor. Fortunately, good neighbors are found everywhere. They live in houses, apartment buildings, urban, suburban and rural areas.

The USAG Stuttgart Police Department Neighborhood Watch Program unites the Department with local organizations and individual residents in a community-wide effort to reduce residential crime. Neighbors working together with the USAG Stuttgart Police Department are a formidable crime fighting team. Be a good neighbor and make your community safer by starting a Neighborhood Watch Program.

## **WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH?**

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program enlisting the active participation of residents in cooperation with the USAG Stuttgart Police Department to reduce crime and fear of crime in their communities. It involves neighbors getting to know each other to develop a program of mutual assistance. It involves neighbors being educated in crime reporting and suspect identification techniques. Finally, it involves neighbors using crime prevention strategies as tools to reduce crime in their communities.

## **WHY A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEEDED?**

The community has the primary responsibility for fighting crime. The most effective approach to fighting crime is a proactive one, i.e., stopping it before it occurs. This can happen when neighbors cooperate with each other to assist the USAG Stuttgart Police Department. Neighborhood Watch members place stickers in their windows and post Neighborhood Watch signs on streets, warning criminals they are in an active Neighborhood Watch community, and that "neighbors are watching out for each other."

Remember, you and your neighbors are the ones who really know what is going on in your community and there can't be a Military Police Officer on every corner. Resident involvement is essential to combat crime.

## **HOW DO I START A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM?**

The USAG Stuttgart Police Department will assist in starting a program in your neighborhood. A USAG Stuttgart Police representative will be available for your first meeting to assist with the initial organization of the Neighborhood Watch Program and discuss crime concerns specific to your neighborhood or community. Contact the USAG Stuttgart Police Department to get started. Talk to your neighbors. Are they interested? Do they understand the value of a Neighborhood Watch Program? Are they aware of, or concerned about specific issues in your area? If they are, be sure to mention the following:

- Neighborhood Watch is a partnership between neighbors to assist the USAG Stuttgart Police in the reduction and fear of crime
- Neighborhood Watch does not require frequent meetings
- Neighborhood Watch does not ask anyone to take personal risks to prevent crime
- USAG Stuttgart Police Department personnel will attend your meetings to answer questions about crime and provide information about police procedures and connect you to the right resources
- Arrange a date, time and place for the first meeting.
- Set the meeting date far enough in advance to give everyone adequate notice.

- Make sure the time is convenient for your neighbors as well as the USAG Stuttgart Police representative that will be attending.
- Distribute flyer and or use social media announcing the meeting and remind everyone a few days before to assure his or her attendance. If you are anticipating a small group, have the meeting at one of the houses in the neighborhood. The location should make everyone feel comfortable. Everyone may not attend, and that's okay. The program can still be successful.
- Hold the first meeting
- Distribute nametags
- Make opening remarks
- Provide simple refreshments to create a relaxed atmosphere.

Ask the USAG Stuttgart Police representative to cover the following topics:

- Crime prevention programs
- The main purpose of the Neighborhood Watch Program
- Specific crime problems in the area
- Effective crime prevention techniques
- How residents can become the "eyes and ears" and assist them with criminal investigations
- How to report a crime and what to look for when providing a description.

Select a Coordinator. The role of the Coordinator is to:

- Oversee and arrange Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- Be a spokesperson for the group.
- Serve as a liaison between the USAG Stuttgart Police Department and the Neighborhood Watch group.
- Recruit neighbors to share the responsibility of hosting meetings.
- Maintain a list of all members.
- Designate work assignments such as enrolling new members, vacation home watch, block parents, neighborhood patrol, fund-raising, secretarial duties, developing and maintaining block maps and crime prevention material distribution.
- Remind members to call the MP Desk with potential public safety concerns.

## Develop and distribute maps

- A map will help members give the USAG Stuttgart Police precise information when reporting suspicious activity in your neighborhood. Your map should:
  - Identify the Coordinator
  - Clearly identify streets, cross streets and compass points
  - Provide the name, address, and telephone numbers of each home and identify the ones with burglar alarms
  - Identify seniors and/or neighbors with health or mobility problems who may need special attention
  - List the make, model and license plate numbers of vehicles at each home. Help neighbors by letting them know which vehicles belong there during daytime hours
  - Include non-emergency telephone numbers for police, fire and ambulance
    - For crimes in progress or life threatening situations, call MP Desk 070-3115-3095 or German Police at 110 immediately
  - Update and reissue maps when any information changes.

## Gather and share information

- Knowing more about your neighbors, their vehicles and their daily routines will help you recognize unusual or suspicious activities. Consider exchanging the following types of basic information with your neighbors:
  - Home and work telephone numbers
  - Names, ages and number of family members or residents
  - Work hours
  - School or day-care hours of children
  - Who owns a dog
  - Planned vacations or visitors
  - Scheduled deliveries or repairs

## **MAINTAINING THE PROGRAM**

After your Neighborhood Watch is established, be sure everyone understands and observes the following guidelines:

- Be alert to unusual or suspicious behavior in your neighborhood. Call the MP Desk if necessary. Write down descriptions of suspicious person(s) and license numbers
- Tell a trusted neighbor if your house will be unoccupied for an extended period. Tell him or her how to reach you in an emergency
- Look after your neighbor's homes when they are away and ask them to look after yours. This includes picking up mail, newspapers and storing trashcans or recycling bins. Don't send a message that says, "No One Is Home"
- Attend Neighborhood Watch meetings often. USAG Stuttgart representative will speak to you about local crime trends and what you can do about them
- Above all, stay involved. It is the most effective way to reduce or prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe and remember your job is to report crime. The responsibility for apprehending criminals belongs to the police.

## **REPORTING CRIME**

Eyewitness information is the key to solving many crimes. The following tips will assist you when reporting crime. Call immediately. A five-minute delay can reduce the chance of catching criminals. Tell the MP Desk as much as you can. No fact is too trivial. In many cases, what victims and witnesses tell the police about the criminal that results in an arrest. You may be asked the following when reporting a crime:

- Who, What, When, and Where?
- How many suspects were there?
- Can you describe the suspect(s)?
- Can you describe their vehicle(s)?
- What was/were the license plate number(s)?
- What did they do?
- What did they say?
- What did they take?
- Which way did they go?

Due to limited resources and personnel or a heavy emergency call load, the Military Police may not be able to respond immediately. We have to prioritize their responses based on apparent danger to human life. Don't be discouraged. We will get to you as soon as possible. Do not attempt to stop or detain the suspect(s) yourself.

## **WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS?**

Anything that seems even slightly "out of place" or is occurring at an unusual time of day or night could be criminal activity. The following are some obvious things to watch for:

- A stranger entering your neighbor's house when it is unoccupied
- A scream heard anywhere might mean robbery or assault
- Offers of merchandise at ridiculously low prices may mean stolen property
- Anyone removing accessories, license plates, or gas from a vehicle should be reported
- Anyone peering into parked vehicles may be looking for a vehicle to steal or for valuables left in the vehicle
- Persons entering or leaving a place of business after hours
- A sound of breaking glass or loud explosive noises could mean an accident, burglary or vandalism
- Persons loitering around schools, parks and secluded areas could be sex offenders
- Persons loitering in the neighborhood who do not live there; and
- Anyone forcing entry to, or tampering with a residence, business, or vehicle should be reported.

## **THE NOT SO OBVIOUS**

- Strangers and solicitors

Verify the employment of all solicitors, meter readers and repair personnel prior to allowing them entry into your home. Never take a telephone number offered by a suspicious person. Be suspicious of alleged delivery personnel with a wrong address or asking if someone lives there.



- Someone carrying property

If it's at an unusual hour, unusual place, or if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.

- Someone going door-to-door in your neighborhood

Watch for a while. If after a few houses are visited, one or more persons tries a door to see if it is locked, looks into windows, or goes into a back or side yard, it could be a burglar. Call the MP Desk immediately; don't wait for the person to leave.

- Traffic to and from a certain residence

It is not suspicious unless it occurs on a daily basis or very regular basis, especially during late or unusual hours. But any vehicle moving slowly and without lights, or following a course that appears aimless or repetitive in any location is, particularly in areas of schools, parks and playgrounds. Occupants may be looking for places to rob or burglarize.

- Parked vehicles containing one or more persons

If it is an unusual hour they could be lookouts for a burglary in progress. An abandoned vehicle parked on your block may be a stolen vehicle or could be people using illegal substances

- Any person taking a shortcut through a backyard

One or more juveniles walking through the neighborhood looking into automobiles or backyards could lead to a crime.

## **ACTION PLANNING**

After completing the presentation, have the group designate who the Coordinator will be. The Coordinator can designate individuals to take charge of the responsibilities concerning the Neighborhood Watch group.

Additionally, the group can work together with the USAG Stuttgart Police representative in creating an action plan, a personal property inventory list and a suspect/vehicle description form.

## **CONCLUSION**

The key to keeping a Neighborhood Watch group active is maintaining interest over time. By getting everyone involved you will create a feeling of pride and the atmosphere of a small town. Neighborhood Watch can easily be adapted to meet your needs, wherever you live or work. Active Neighborhood Watch groups can make changes, through Garrison services, such as improving street lighting, increasing extra patrol and changing traffic flow patterns. Make belonging to your Neighborhood Watch group enjoyable. People will get involved and remain interested if the programs are fun as well as meaningful. Use your imagination. Schedule potluck dinners, organize cleanup campaigns or hold block parties. The possibilities are endless when neighbors unite and work together.