



# ***NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME WATCH OPERATIONS MANUAL***

*Sheriff Mark Reynolds*

*Comal County Sheriff's Office*

*Community Resource Team*

**830-643-5840**

# **Comal County Sheriff's Office Neighborhood Watch Group Coordinators:**

The Comal County Sheriff's Office, Community Resource Team currently has three Crime Prevention Specialists and one civilian practitioner to assist in coordinating all of Comal County's Neighborhood Watch Groups. Please contact them with any questions or concerns you may have.

## ***Contact Information:***

***Comal County Sheriff's Office Community Resource Team***

***830-643-5840***

## ***CERTIFIED CRIME PREVENTION SPECIALISTS:***

***Sgt. Ricardo Cardenas; Cpl. John Montanez; Deputy Herman John Medina***

***Civilian Crime Prevention Practitioner Jakob Willmann***

## **What is the Comal County Sheriff's Office Neighborhood Watch Program?**

The **Comal County Sheriff's Office** NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM is the first step in protecting your neighborhood. It requires the active participation of citizens in cooperation with law enforcement to prevent crimes in neighborhoods. The primary goal of the Comal County Sheriff's Office NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM is to help you increase the safety of the citizens and to protect their property.

The program is centered on teaching citizens assorted safety measures that may be utilized in order to protect themselves and their property. The Comal County Sheriff's Office NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM allows them and the communities to be involved in a form of community policing.

### **Community policing:**

Community policing is a form of policing that focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of crime prevention, problem solving, community engagement, and partnerships.

The community-policing model balances reactive responses to calls for service with proactive problem solving centered on the causes of crime and disorder. Community policing requires that local law enforcement and citizens alike join as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing crime issues in their respected communities.

## **Why should I be involved with the Comal County Sheriff's Office Neighborhood Watch Program?**

You have a chance to make a safety conscious impact in the area that you live in.

Individual citizens are responsible for protecting their neighborhood. You can do this by reporting suspicious activity and crime.

It is the responsibility of the Comal County Sheriff's Office to investigate and make the arrest when evidence supports the claim.

### **Who can be involved?**

Any group of citizens that reside within an unincorporated area of Comal County that has the support of the majority of the residents located on one block within a neighborhood can be involved.

### **Active Participation:**

To be an "Active" Neighborhood Watch Program each group must elect an overall president, co-captains and must hold two (2) neighborhood watch meetings or activities per year.

As a suggestion, one of those yearly meeting may include your National Night Out gathering held on the first Tuesday in October.

Register for National Night out on the National Association of Town Watch Website and the Comal County Sheriff's Office website.

## **The Neighborhood Watch Captain plays a very important role in the Neighborhood Watch program.**

### **What are the responsibilities of a Neighborhood Watch Captain?**

A Neighborhood Watch captain's involvement and enthusiasm is very important to the success of the program!

Use your initial Neighborhood Watch meeting to establish your neighbors meaning and purpose of the Neighborhood Watch program.

Establish a meeting place and get people out to meet one another.

Include snacks and a fun activity for the children.

One of your first meetings must include information on the following:

- 1.) Information on the Comal County Neighborhood Watch Program
- 2.) Registration for the Neighborhood Watch Group
- 3.) Registration for National Night Out
- 4.) Forming a Citizens Patrol
- 5.) How can Social Media help the group
- 6.) Reporting suspicious persons and activity
- 7.) Criminal Trespassing
- 8.) Yearly Crime Statistics in your area
- 9.) Home Security, Training Manual (Target Hardening your home)
- 10.) Vehicle Security
- 11.) The "C.A.P.T.U.R.E." Program

A Comal County, Crime Prevention Officer will present crime prevention tips and information as well as other important crime prevention information.

Form all subsequent meetings around crime statistics and concerns that pertain to the neighborhood. The purpose of these meetings should be informative as well as meeting and greeting new members alike.

## **The Neighborhood Watch Captain is responsible for the following:**

1. Keep a historical file of Neighborhood Watch attendance rosters.
2. Keep a roster of active Neighborhood Watch members.
3. Keep yearly crime statistics on file.
4. Invite the Comal County Sheriff's Office to your yearly meetings.
5. Assist one another as captains to coordinate two meetings a year.
6. Assist one another as captains to coordinate meeting places.
7. Disseminate important criminal activity information that has occurred within your area to fellow captains and all neighborhood watch members.

## **A Checklist for Starting a Neighborhood Watch:**

1. A group of people committed to starting a Neighborhood Watch
2. A planning committee to initiate the program
3. A list of what issues initially need to be addressed in your community
4. A means of communicating with the residents, e-mail, fliers, or social media.
5. Publicity for the initial Neighborhood Watch meeting i. e. flyers, social media.
6. Document topics discussed at each meeting.
7. A meeting agenda to keep things moving and on track
8. A place to meet i. e. resident's house or apartment, community center, school, library
9. A crime prevention officer to discuss the crime issues in the neighborhood
10. Neighborhood Watch signs to be purchased and posted around the community.
11. Crime statistics of your area provided by the Crime Prevention Officer

## **Make your meetings be a social event gathering:**

1. Mix business with pleasure -allow attendees time to socialize.
2. Work with such existing organizations such as Home and Property Owners Association.
3. Provide speakers on topics of community interest.
4. Start a neighborhood social media site i.e. Networking, Facebook, and Nextdoor etc.

## **Building Partnerships:**

The Comal County Sheriff's Office endorsement is critical to a Watch group's credibility. The Comal County Sheriff's Office, Community Resource Team can provide information on local crime patterns, crime prevention education, and crime reporting.

## **Neighborhood Watch – The Meeting:**

The success of a neighborhood watch is directly related to the ongoing participation and support from each member of the neighborhood watch group.

### **Welcome and Sign-In:**

Welcome everyone, and use a sign-in sheet to keep track of who is present at each meeting. Read aloud the agenda and items to be covered, and tell residents there will be time after the meeting to ask questions.

### **Introductions:**

Let residents introduce themselves by giving their name and address. Residents might also briefly tell their reason for coming to the meeting or would like to see the group accomplish in the neighborhood.

### **Discussion of Neighborhood Issues:**

Allow residents time to raise specific neighborhood concerns. At the first few meetings, residents might express anger and frustration over neighborhood problems, or criticize law enforcement for not doing more to address their problems. As time goes on, though, residents will use this time to focus on specific issues and ways to address them.

### **Crime Prevention Presentation:**

During the first meetings, the Crime Prevention Officer will provide information on crime prevention topics and ways to maintain an active, effective neighborhood watch.

For following meetings, invite guest speakers to discuss current issues or speak on topics members are interested in, Reporting Suspicious Activity, Reporting a Crime In Progress, First Aid, Gun Safety, Substance Abuse or Domestic Violence.

### **Selection of a Watch Captain:**

The basic structure of a neighborhood watch involves a captain and members. A captain is elected into his or her position by members during the first meeting and may serve for a term decided by those members.

Allow captains to rotate out from time to time to avoid burnout and maximize the creativity and energy of other members.

## **Date, Time, Place for Next Meeting:**

Meet at least twice a year and keep the communications of ongoing information through social media or more meetings as the watch group sees fit.

Keep the Comal County Sheriff's Office informed of meetings throughout each year.

## **Adjourn/Refreshments:**

The time after the meeting can be as important as the meeting itself. During this time, members have the opportunity to visit and build friendships and informally brainstorm on future goals and strategies.

## **Neighborhood Watch Meeting Agenda:**

1. Welcome and Sign-In
2. Introductions
3. Presentations or topics to be discussed
4. Table all topics and allow all members an opportunity to express ideas and concerns.
5. Date, Time, and Place for Next Meeting

Post through flyers or on social media for the recruitment of membership to new homeowners in your area or those folks that have not joined the neighborhood watch group.

## **Sample Letter to your focused group in your subdivision or apartment complex:**

Dear Neighbor;

Neighbors are having a Neighborhood Watch Meeting in our area to discuss crime prevention topics that affect us. Watches are just that: Neighbors watching out for themselves and each other to make the neighborhood a safer place to live. Neighborhood watches all across the country let neighbors get to know each other better, and help to reduce the chance of criminal activity in their neighborhoods and communities.

Our local Crime Prevention Officer helps train us in personal safety and security for our homes, as well as helping us use our time and talents to tackle problems we think can be resolved when we all work together.

Neighborhood watches cost only the time it takes for us to care about our neighborhood. Please come to the meeting and help us discover ways to improve the quality of life in our neighborhood.

WATCH MEETING:

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DATE:

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TIME:

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MEETING PLACE:

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

NAME:

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TELEPHONE:

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Email:

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**Sample Neighborhood Watch  
Membership List:**

Captain: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
Email: _____	
2. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
Email: _____	
3. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
Email: _____	
4. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
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5. Name: _____	Address: _____
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Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
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7. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
Email: _____	
8. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
Email: _____	
9. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
Email: _____	
10. Name: _____	Address: _____
Phone: Day: _____	Evening: _____
Email: _____	

**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH ATTENDANCE  
SHEET:**

Captain \_\_\_\_\_  
Captains Physical Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Captains Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Captains Cell Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Captains Email Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subdivision or Apartment Complex \_\_\_\_\_  
Date/Time of meeting \_\_\_\_\_  
Meeting Location \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Homeowners Attended \_\_\_\_\_  
1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of year \_\_\_\_\_

***PLEASE PRINT***

**Member Name, Address, Phone Number, Email Address**

1.  
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2.  
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