

NWACA

Neighborhood Watch

# Guidebook for Neighbors

Rev:02/18/2023



<b>Block Captain:</b>	
<b>Street Address:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	

[www.nwaca.org](http://www.nwaca.org)

## NWACA Neighborhood Watch Approach

### Key Players

- NWACA Crime and Safety Committee
- Neighborhood Watch Block Captains – each captain watches over a block of homes (block = street, portion of a street, more than one street, as appropriate)
- Neighbors – residents on a street within a Neighborhood Watch block
- Austin Police Department (APD) – Region 1, Baker sector covers NWACA

### General Approach

- Neighbors notify NWACA of an interest in setting up a Neighborhood Watch
  - email to [info@nwaca.org](mailto:info@nwaca.org)
  - complete the Neighborhood Watch request form online at [www.nwaca.org](http://www.nwaca.org)
- NWACA Crime and Safety Committee
  - Solicits block captains and other interested leaders
  - Trains Block Captains, providing them a set of materials for their role
  - Assists with training for a block gathering of neighbors
  - Provides a Neighborhood Watch sign for each block which has completed its training, as well as assistance with putting up the sign
  - Establishes -a collection of references and resources on the NWACA web site
  - Attends APD Community Forums for NWACA.
  - Communicates regularly with Block Captains.
- Block Captain
  - Attends training for block captains
  - Creates a list of their block neighbors
  - Calls a meeting of the neighbors, at which NWACA Crime and Safety Committee provides training materials for each neighbor
  - Continuously monitors the block and passes information to neighbors, police, other block captains, Crime and Safety Committee, and surrounding neighborhoods as appropriate
  - Attends APD Community Forums for NWACA, when held.
- Each neighbor (perhaps with help of the Block Captain)
  - Conducts a safety check of their home, using the provided checklist
  - Does their Five – getting to know the 5 nearby neighbors
  - Continuously monitors the block and reports any issues to the block captain and others

## Neighborhood Safety Tips – for any Neighbor

### *Stay “ALERT” and “Do the Five”*

#### **Be A.L.E.R.T.**

ALERT – I know who my neighbors and their kids are, and I know which cars belong on my street.

LIGHTS – My house is well-lit at night. I have installed motion detectors or dusk-to-dawn lights in areas where people may walk.

EMERGENCY – I am ready for a crisis and keep neighbors’ phone numbers handy, just in case. I know neighbors’ children would come to my house for help. I could tell fire fighters how many pets and people in the house if there was a fire on my street.

RESPONSIBLE – I call 311 and 911 when I see a potential issue or crime. I ask for an incident number and report it to Neighborhood Watch so it can be tracked. I bring bigger issues to my Neighborhood Association so the community is aware of what is happening.

TIDY – I keep my home, yard, and street neat. I trim my bushes and trees so windows and doors can be seen. I keep my driveway and porch free of clutter. I pick up trash on my street, handle graffiti, and pitch in to help other neighbors who need a hand. I want criminals to see that my home and street are cared for and their activities will not be tolerated.

#### **Do the “Five”**

I keep an eye out for my neighbors on either side of my house and on the three houses across the street:

- Pick up newspapers, trash, and flyers
- Mow grass, remove dead brush, keep things tidy
- Offer to park your car in a neighbor’s driveway if they are on vacation
- Be creative and send criminals a clear message: I live here and I care about my neighborhood.

#### **Get a Home Security Survey**

The Austin Police Department (APD) provides a free home security survey for any homeowner who wishes to have one. To arrange for a survey, call Veronica Saldate by phone 512-974-4735 or send her email at [veronica.saldate@austintexas.gov](mailto:veronica.saldate@austintexas.gov)

**Remember, criminals want:**

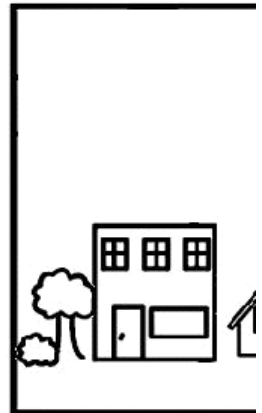
***Easy targets, easy access, lack of enforcement, lack of concerned citizens***

Good Neighbors do the Five - One house on either side, three across the street!



**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH  
PROGRAM IN FORCE**

**WE IMMEDIATELY  
REPORT  
ALL SUSPICIOUS PERSONS  
AND ACTIVITIES TO OUR  
POLICE DEPARTMENT**



**My five are:**

- Name/Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_
- Name/Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_
- Name/Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_
- Name/Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_
- Name/Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

## Burglary Prevention Checklist for Homes

This checklist was designed to help you make a security survey of your home. It can help you identify features in your home or daily routines of your family that might make your home an easy target for a burglar.

Begin the checklist at your front door; then inspect each of your doors and windows, locks, lights, and your landscaping. Each question on the checklist that you answer with “NO” indicates a security weakness or hazard that requires your attention.

	<b>Doors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1	Are all outside doors in the house of metal or solid wood construction?		
2	Are all exterior doors equipped with single cylinder deadbolt locks?		
3	Are door frames strong enough and tight enough to prevent forcing or spreading?		
4	Are all door locks adequate and in good repair?		
5	Are all exterior doors equipped with heavy-duty strike plates with a minimum of 3" screws to secure them?		
6	Has the hole in the doorjamb, surrounded by the strike plate, been drilled at least 1" deep?		
7	Is it impossible for the locking mechanism to be reached through a mail slot, delivery port, or pet door?		
8	If there is a screen or storm door, does it have an adequate lock?		
9	Are all entrances lighted with at least a 40-watt light?		
10	Are outside lights controlled by timers or photo-electric cells, for automatic operation?		
11	Can the front entrance be observed from the street or public area?		
12	Do you know everyone who has a key to your residence?		
13	Are porch and landscaping areas lighted, to avoid someone concealing themselves from view from street or public area?		
14	If there is a sliding glass door, is the sliding panel secured from being lifted out of its track?		
15	Is a "charley-bar" or key-operated auxiliary lock used on sliding glass doors?		
16	Do you have an alarm system or a dog, to warn off intruders?		

Adapted from “Austin Police Department Neighborhood Watch Manual,” p. 21-22 and tips from the Allendale Neighborhood Association

## NWACA – Northwest Austin Civic Association

<b>Basements and Other Entrances</b>		Yes	No
1	Are all entrances to living quarters from garage, porch, balcony and basement made of metal or solid wood construction?		
2	Does the door from a garage or basement to the living quarters have an adequate lock operated from the living quarters' side of the door?		
3	If there is a door from outside to the basement, is that door adequately secure for an exterior door?		
4	Is any outside basement entrance lighted by an exterior light of at least 40 watts?		
5	Can any outside basement door be seen from the street or by neighbors?		
6	Are all basement windows adequately secured against entrance?		

<b>Windows</b>		Yes	No
1	Do all windows have adequate locks in operating condition?		
2	If windows have screens or storm windows, do they lock from inside?		
3	Do the windows opening to hazardous areas or offering increased risk of burglary have additional security?		
4	Do windows that open to hazardous areas have security screens, grills or bars that open from the inside?		
5	Is the area around windows clear of bushes and foliage, so that nobody can lurk and hide there? [Note: Low foliage is also a wildfire prevention tip.]		

<b>Daily Practices</b>		Yes	No
1	When you are not in the garage, is your garage door closed and locked?		
2	If your car is on the street or in the driveway, is it always locked, with no valuables out in plain sight?		
3	When you have workers coming to your house, especially if you're not present, do you tell a neighbor, so they can easily identify the workers?		
4	Does everyone in the family know to leave immediately and call 9-1-1, if you suspect someone has broken into your home?		
5	If a neighbor's garage door is inadvertently left open, notify them. If the door has an outside control box that allows you to the door, press "enter" to close it.		
6*	Use the " <b>9PM Routine</b> ": The best way to prevent vehicle burglaries is to remove <u>all</u> of your valuables (especially firearms), lock your vehicle's doors upon exiting, and take the vehicle keys inside your residence. Confirm that the garage door is closed and close and lock all house windows and doors. Turn on outside lights. Set an alarm (on your cell phone) for 9PM as a reminder to do this routine <u>EVERY night</u> before retiring. Educate all household members and share tasks to make this habitual.		

Adapted from "Austin Police Department Neighborhood Watch Manual," p. 21-22 and tips from the Allendale Neighborhood Association

\*Adapted from *Neighbors Public Safety Service* – "A guide to the 9PM Routine"

## General Home Security Checklist

This checklist was designed to help you go through your home and check to see that you are not inviting a burglary by having an "open house." The checklist covers the common areas of weakness in residential security.

Take a critical look at your home security every three to four months. Don't become lax- CRIME PREVENTION IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS.

		✓
1	Do you plan so that you do not need to "hide" a key under the doormat?	
2	Do you keep as much cash as possible, other valuables, and a home inventory in a bank?	
3	Have you engraved all of your property with your driver's license number and included the state?	
4	Do you have a list of the serial numbers of your watches, cameras, typewriters, TV's, stereos, and all items that have serial numbers?	
5	Do you have a description of other valuable property that does not have a number?	
6	Do you avoid unnecessary display or publicity of your valuables?	
7	Have you told your family what to do if they discover a burglar breaking into or already in the house?	
8	Have you told your family to leave the house undisturbed and call the police, if they discover a burglary has been committed?	
9	Is your house number easily visible from the street, for police and other emergency vehicles to locate you?	

### Secondary Barrier - Security Closet

If you have valuable items such as silverware or jewels, consider a secondary barrier. Install a solid core wood door with a one-inch deadbolt on a closet. Store your valuables in that area. Also, be sure to pin the hinges. If you use your master bedroom closet, it can become a momentary hiding place to flee in the event of an intruder. It would be even more effective if a cordless telephone were inside the closet to allow calling 911 and alerting the police to the intruder. Keep coin and stamp collections in a safe deposit box.

### CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY ABOUT ALL SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY.

Don't worry about "bothering" the police or being embarrassed if your suspicions prove to be unfounded. Think ahead about what could happen if you don't act, Give the police or clerk:

- The reason for the call.
- The location of the activity.
- The description of the suspect and any vehicle involved.
- If a crime is in progress, provide the circumstances and possible crime being committed.

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Adapted from "Austin Police Department Neighborhood Watch Manual," p. 23-24

## Vacation Checklist for Home Security

Use this list to minimize your home being a target for a burglar while you are on vacation.

		✓
1	Lock all doors, including the garage door and pet doors.	
2	Lock all windows, including basement and garage windows.	
3	Cancel all deliveries such as newspaper, food services, etc.	
4	Have mail and newspapers picked up by a neighbor, if possible.	
5	Have someone pick up handbills and throwaways.	
6	Never leave a note on the door that may indicate your absence.	
7	Arrange to have the lawn and landscaping cared for, appropriate to the season.	
8	Adjust blinds to make the home appear to be occupied. Do not close all drapes and blinds.	
9	Place a light or two inside on automatic timers. Have outdoor lights go on at dusk and off at dawn.	
10	Remove ladders from sight and secure them in locked places.	
11	Don't hide keys under doormats or flowerpots or in similar places.	
12	Be sure nothing valuable is visible from windows. Consider putting key valuables (heirlooms, expensive jewelry, etc.) in a safe deposit box off-site.	
13	Arrange for a house-sitter, someone to live in your house while you are away, if possible.	
14	Arrange for a neighbor to keep an eye on your property and to report anything suspicious to police.	
15	Let a neighbor know where you can be reached in case of an emergency.	
16	Leave your car in the driveway, or have a neighbor leave their car parked in your driveway or in front of your home, if you are traveling with your car.	
17	Leave a radio on just inside your doorway.	
18	Lower the tone on any land-line phone. If you have an answering machine, check and remove messages regularly while you are gone, so that it doesn't fill, signaling to callers that you're away.	
19	Ask neighbors not to tell strangers such as salespersons and repair persons of your absence.	
20	Do not advertise your absence in social media before or during your vacation.	
21	Notify your local law-enforcement agency of your absence.	

Adapted from "Austin Police Department Neighborhood Watch Manual," p. 20



## Solicitor Safety Guidelines

- 1. Acknowledge you are home:** When someone knocks at your door, acknowledge you are home. Talk through the door without opening it. If you don't answer, and it happens to be a criminal they may attempt to break into your home.
- 2. Do not feel obligated to open the door:** You are not obligated to open the door to anyone. If they say there is a car problem, offer to call their road service for them. If it is an accident, call 9-1-1 for them. The idea is to keep them outside and you make the call for them. Ask them to stand by while you place the call. If the person stays, it is a good chance that they are legitimate; however, if they leave quickly, it is probably a con.
- 3. Insist on identification:** Identification should always be verified BEFORE opening the door. Insist they disclose their name, company and the product or service represented. Service representatives should have appointments and not just "show up" at your door. Also, make sure to install a wide angle viewer in your door, so you have a better view – you can buy them at any hardware store.
- 4. Call if the person is persistent or if something seems "off":** While some solicitors are legitimate, it is also a tactic used by criminals to 'case' neighborhoods, looking for easy targets. Be aware that criminals will often be carrying backpacks and cell phones. People who are lying often give too many details, touch their face a lot, or keep looking away. Experienced con men will also send younger kids into the neighborhood to do the knocking, knowing that a child will not draw the suspicion that an adult might.
- 5. Get a description:** Start at the head and then work down to the feet. What is the race, hair color/length, facial hair? Do they have a hat? What color shirt? What color pants? Are there other details, like a logo on the shirt? How tall are they (compare them to a family member.) Look for other details; distinguishing features, direction of travel, another person, a vehicle and get the license number. Write down the information.
- 6. Help police connect the dots:** If anything seems strange or suspicious, **CALL!** Why? Because criminals move around and calling in things that seem suspicious can help the police connect the dots. Maybe the police have had reports of another person matching this description in another neighborhood. Maybe somebody a few streets over reported that same car. Maybe other neighbors have reported the same fake company going door-to-door to their APD representative.  
**Call 911** - if it is happening now. "I just had a solicitor on my door and he could not show me a company card and kept asking questions about things he shouldn't have asked."  
**Call 311** - you want the police to be aware of something, but it's not an urgent matter. "My neighbor just told me there was a young man who knocked his door last night, He was driving a white Ford truck and he seemed too persistent or There is a blue Honda Accord that has been driving around our streets for a couple of days."

## NWACA – Northwest Austin Civic Association

### Neighborhood Watch Resources

<p>NWACA Web Site Info</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.NWACA.org">www.NWACA.org</a></li> <li>• Use the Resources tab on the home page; go to Library; select Neighborhood Watch from the menu on the right side of the page</li> <li>• Resources include Block Captain and Neighbor Guidebooks, and supporting files</li> </ul>
<p>Web sites and online resources about Neighborhood Watch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood Watch – Austin Police Department – general advice (check with neighborhood association or APD District Rep)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="http://www.austintexas.gov/faq/how-do-i-start-neighborhood-watch">http://www.austintexas.gov/faq/how-do-i-start-neighborhood-watch</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• National Night Out – Austin – description and registration information for doing a NNO event for your neighborhood; enables you to get City personnel – firemen, police, EMS, Code Compliance – as well as packets of information             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="http://austintexas.gov/nno">http://austintexas.gov/nno</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Resources online</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Austin Police Department Neighborhood Watch Manual – 25 page collection of advice, including materials from several sources outside of Austin             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Police/Neighborhood_Watch_Manual_Revised_9_3_13.pdf">http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Police/Neighborhood_Watch_Manual_Revised_9_3_13.pdf</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Next Door – Private social network for a given neighborhood - intended for building community and for reporting and hearing about neighborhood issues such as crimes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="https://nextdoor.com/">https://nextdoor.com/</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Crime Information websites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Austin monthly crime statistics are reported <a href="https://www.austintexas.gov/page/chiefs-monthly-reports">https://www.austintexas.gov/page/chiefs-monthly-reports</a>. “Baker Section” is the patrol area which includes NWACA</li> <li>• Krimelabb – viewer for data and statistics about crimes in Austin; uses APD database of crime reports             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="http://krimelabb.com/">http://krimelabb.com/</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Spotcrime – information about specific crimes, to get email alerts about crimes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="http://spotcrime.com/tx/austin">http://spotcrime.com/tx/austin</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• APD site for alerts on crime and for reporting crime activities – Citizen Observer To sign up: <a href="https://www.citizenobserver.com/people/sign_up">https://www.citizenobserver.com/people/sign_up</a></li> </ul>
<p>Property owner information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travis Central Appraisal District database (TCAD) – information about who owns the property at a given address, history of changes of ownership, and tax details; can search by owner name, street, specific address. This can be a quick way to get the names of people who live along a street for which you’re setting up a Neighborhood Watch (though you may need some trial and error to get what you want – the system isn’t very user-friendly!)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://stage.travis.prodigycad.com/property-search">https://stage.travis.prodigycad.com/property-search</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>