



Kingston Neighborhood Watch Guide



Presented by
Neighborhood Watch Groups of Kingston NY
Inc.

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What is the Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that enlists the active participation of residents in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime, solve problems, and improve the quality of life in your area. In it you will get to know and work with your neighbors, and learn how to:

- **Recognize and report crimes and suspicious activities**
- **Protect yourself, your family, and your property,**
- **Protect your neighbor's family and property, and**
- **Identify crime and disorder problems in your area and work with KPD personnel to solve them.**

Crime or the fear of crime provides the impetus for residents to become better informed on how to protect themselves and their property.

Getting back to the old adage of being our "brother's keepers", means neighbors watching out for other neighbors. Neighbors are asked to be the eyes and ears in helping the police in apprehending criminals. Crime Watch is not designed to substitute for police protection. Rather it is an extension or supplement in assisting the police in making neighborhoods safer for all residents.

Neighborhood Watch operates under two principles:

- **When neighbors get to know and watch out for each other, this helps to create an identity within the neighborhood and community pride and belonging for the participants.**
- **Second, Neighborhood Watch allows participants to be safer not only through crime prevention, but the visible force and strength in numbers reduces crime while empowering the community.**

The participants make their neighborhood a safer place to live by adopting a more observant and active attitude and, as a result, become more aware of strange cars, persons, or circumstances. This will not take a lot of time and soon will develop into a daily habit of becoming more aware of what is going on in the neighborhood.

Kingston Neighborhood Watch Basics:

Participation in the Neighborhood Watch is not something that takes a lot of time. It does require that each person adopts a more observant and active attitude on a daily basis.

As a result, neighbors will get to know each other better and will become more aware of strange cars, persons or circumstances that might require calling the police or the Neighborhood Watch Communication Chain.

What participants do to make their homes more secure and how alert they become is entirely up to them. The more prepared individuals are, the more effective will be the weapon against crime. Everyone must take a smart part and should want to do as much as they can!

- **Get to know your neighbors. Know their names and be able to identify them and their vehicles by sight.**
- **Be familiar with the maps maintained by the Kingston Neighborhood Watch. Know where they are updated online. Know who, in your immediate area, is an active participant in the Watch.**
- **Participate in SeeClickFix online if at all possible. Follow the guidelines to make accurate reporting that is helpful to the local authorities.**
- **Be observant and watch over neighbors' homes, especially when they are not at home or out of town.**
- **Write down license numbers, take pictures and descriptions of suspicious-looking vehicles and persons in the neighborhood and report them to the police of Neighborhood Watch Communication Chain immediately.**
- **Report information that may be helpful in solving a crime to the police.**
- **Educate children in crime prevention and teach respect and friendship for law enforcement and police officials.**

Other neighborhoods across the USA have used these proven tactics time and again to take a stand against drugs and violence in their communities!

Kingston can do it too.

If crime has a strong grip on a neighborhood, it's hard to take the first steps toward reclaiming our streets. People are afraid that if they act, criminals will take revenge. This is what the criminal element relays upon and helps create a downward spiral in communities. We must support each other and take charge.

We can counter this fear, and protect each other, with safety in numbers. Working closely with police as organize group, our various activities give us a strong force to take back our city streets and create the neighborhoods we want to live in.

- **Start at Home:** Ensure your own homes safety first. Take a look at your own personal security measures. Make sure you and your family know area safe houses and are aware of your surroundings.
- **Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood:** Get outside and get to know the people in your immediate areas. Find out their names. Trade contact phone numbers including work numbers and emergency contacts.
- **Communication Chains:** Pay attention to what you see and what you hear. Ensure that knowledge is passed up the communication chain to the person above. If you can help out more, please do what you are able.
- **Neighborhood Walks:** Together, in groups, the Kingston Neighborhood Watch will help organized Neighborhood Walks. We'll be collecting information on criminal activity by writing down plate numbers and descriptions of suspected dealers. We will video tape or photograph illegal activity. That information will be passed on to law enforcement. We'll wear our KNW T-shirts and hats.
- **Bells & Whistles:** Participate in and Help Promote Bells & Whistles Awareness in Kingston. Whistles are to be a citywide recognized call for help. The cow bells will be used to sound out an alert that something is happening in a physical location, such as a drug dealer is on the block. If people are watching, then the Police are being notified.
- **Neighborhood Improvement:** We will work to help neighborhoods deal with landlords who rent to drug dealers. We will organize neighborhood clean-up campaigns to sweep litter and drug items off the streets, clean off, or cover up graffiti, plant flowers and trees and repair broken playgrounds.
- **Publically Support the Watch:** Put up newly designed Kingston neighborhood watch signs that warn drug dealer that residents are watching for crime and reporting it to the police. Support the watch by buying door stickers and wearing T-shirts.

- **Participate in Kingston Neighborhood Watch events and fundraisers.** Supporting and demonstrating the community's collective will help to drive out drug dealers and other criminals by showing a visible force.

Please use good judgment when faced with problems of illegal drug use or sales or other criminal activities, in your neighborhood. Think about how you can report a drug problem without subjecting yourself to retaliation. If you feel unsafe, then pass the knowledge on to the next Watch member above.

It's important to report, but it's equally important to report safely!

Start at Home:

A man's home is his castle, so start by fortifying your own. Check your own doors and locks. How about windows, fire alarms?

Do you have a privacy fence that obstructs your neighbors' view of your backyard? Are your fence cross rails on the outside presenting a stepladder-type entry into your backyard? What about your gate - is it secured?

Privacy fencing is a disadvantage to home security since it provides concealment. Other forms of fencing would eliminate this disadvantage, but here are some methods to offset this problem:

- **Remove every other slat along the alley side of the fence to allow greater visibility.**
- **Plant a hostile-type plant to cover the outside of the fence, (i.e., climbing roses with large thorns or pyracantha).**
- **Padlock your gate so that entry is made more difficult**

As someone walks up to the doors of your house, can you see them from the inside? Do you know who is outside before you open it? Install a wide-angle viewer (peephole) in the door. This will let you know who is on the outside before the door is open. (A 190-degree view is recommended).

Now, how about that door? Is it solid core? Is it metal? Is it cracked or splitting? How thick is it?

Not only your front door, but also all of your exterior doors and the door between your house and the garage should be of solid core construction or heavy gauge metal. A thinner door may

give if kicked. And if your door is the panel-type, make sure joints haven't come unglued and panels are not split or rotten.

While we are looking at the door, let's have a look at the strike plate on the doorframe.

Is yours of lightweight metal installed with short wood screws?

Other types of doors in the home must also be adequately secured. Sliding glass doors are particularly vulnerable to attacks by burglars.

Secure sliding doors to keep them from sliding or being pried up and out of the track by Pinning: -- Drill a slightly downward sloping hole through top portion of the sliding door frame. Insert a pin. This will help secure the door from being pried open.

To keep it from being lifted out of its track you can place two or three screws in the top track that allow just enough room for the door to open **and** close but will not allow the door to be lifted.

Look at your garage: the point that the door from your house enters your garage should be secured with a deadbolt lock **and** should be of the same sturdy construction as exterior doors.

Examine the garage door. Is it deteriorating and easily bypassed? Does it have windows? How about a garage door opener? Does the cord release for your garage door opener hang by the door when your door is closed? Most garage doors, due to their construction, are difficult to secure. Several recommendations can be made, however: Keep garage doors closed and locked at all times.

Remove any knobs or rings from an automatic garage door release. With these in place, an intruder can place a coat hanger through the top of the garage door and pull the cord (or break a window and reach in), releasing the garage door from the track.

Cover the garage window to prevent persons from viewing inside. It makes it more difficult for someone to determine whether you are home or not. Mirrored film on your windows allow you to see out but doesn't allow them to see in. While on vacation, place a padlock through the track. If your door is deteriorating or you are considering replacement, a windowless garage metal door provides the most security. And while we're in the garage, let's look up.

Do you have an attic access in the garage? If your attic access is in the garage and another inside your residence, the garage attic access should be secured. This can be accomplished by adding a casehardened hinging hasp and padlock. This prevents an intruder from going through the attic, if he does get into the garage.

Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood:

Meet the youth who live on your block and greet them by name.

This is one of the simplest steps an adult can take; yet it can make a profound difference should there be a future need for adults and young people to speak to each other in the midst of a neighborhood crisis. Also, it is difficult to help form a safe and supportive community for children without the adults and children knowing each other. Even those without children should know to whom the various children in the neighborhood belong. In this way, each adult is better able to help in an emergency and is better prepared to discuss problems immediately as they arise.

Make a list of the names and phone numbers of every neighbor on your block.

Not just two neighbors - set a goal of at least 10 and preferably 20 or 30. Find almost any citizen who has turned around a problem block and you will find a citizen who really knows the people who live there. Did you grow up in a neighborhood where "everyone knew each other" and find that today your neighborhood isn't like that? That's true for many people. That's not "society's" fault. Instead, think of it as your own fault, and you can fix it. Unless you know neighbors' names and numbers, you can't call them about a concern or let them know about a neighborhood problem.

Make a list of landlords in your areas as well.

As owners of property in the community, landlords are responsible to the neighborhood and most are rightly concerned about the health of the community in which their properties stand. You can find out the name and address of the person or organization that owns any property, including the rental house next door, by contacting your county tax assessor's office.

Drive *slowly* on neighborhood streets.

While we often call for stop signs, lights, and speed bumps, we often forget that we can organize a means to slow down neighborhood traffic sooner. Remember that it is legal to drive a few miles per hour *below* the speed limit in your neighborhood. For example, if the speed limit is 25, try 20 instead. Regular slower driving on neighborhood side streets by multiple neighbors will dampen the desire of racers to use your street - it isn't as fun to cut through a neighborhood if the likelihood of being stuck behind a car traveling at a more respectful pace has increased. Also, do it on every side street in the neighborhood, not just the one near your home.

Communication Chains

Tell someone! Make sure that you effectively communicate what you see and hear in your own neighborhood. Know what to look for and be aware of the information needed on reports and forms to produce helpful observations that assist in crime prevention. Use Kingston Neighborhood Watch forms whenever possible.

Understanding the basic Neighborhood Watch Communication Chain and how it works:

Regular Watch Members: Neighborhood Watch members are aware of what's happening in their neighborhoods. They know and talk to other neighbors in their community.

When they see or hear something, they report to the local Block Steward and communicates down the chain to other neighbors.

Block Steward: The Block Steward is responsible for a certain self identified neighborhood area that they feel they can effectively communicate with on a regular basis. They maintain the contact information for their neighbors and are a main communication hub on the most local level. Almost anyone who knows a decent number of folks in their immediate area can be a good Block Steward.

The Block Steward reports up the chain to the Ward Steward and communicates down the chain to Watch Members.

Ward Steward: Ward Stewards organize and communicate between the Block Stewards and the Neighborhood Watch Executive Board. Formally meeting with both Block Stewards and The Committee, the Wards have a very important position and are a central point of communication. Both communications and reports then go on to the law enforcement officials such as the KPD and Ulster Sherriff's Departments through the executive committees.

Know who your Block Steward is closest to your home and know the best way to contact them with your safety concerns. Let your Block Steward and other neighbors know what your reported so they can be alert for similar happenings. Your Block Steward will pass the report on and advise you as to what the next steps are.

Neighborhood Walks

An effective tool for Watch programs, Neighborhood Walks are perfect examples of a modified citizen patrol. Citizen patrols are volunteers who walk or drive an area on a regular basis to report incidents and problems to the police and provide a visible presence that deters criminal activity. As a community program, in conjunction with law enforcement, Neighborhood Walks are encourage to where any patrol is needed.

Citizens on Neighborhood Walks have no policing powers, carry no weapons, are non confrontational, and always coordinate activities with law enforcement. A citizen patrol can cover a neighborhood, an apartment lobby or complex, a business district, or a park; we can use bicycles, in-line skates, or cars to cover larger areas. Cameras or video equipment may be used to record suspicious activity.

Basic Rules of Kingston Neighborhood Watch's Neighborhood Walks will be:

- **Proper communication to law enforcement and have their support;**
- **Works in Neighborhood Watch teams across blocks and Wards supporting Citywide efforts.**
- **Wear identifying clothing -t-shirts, caps, etc clearly identifying Neighborhood Walks as Kingston Neighborhood Watch activities.**
- **Never carries weapons of any kind - e.g. guns, black jack, mace, baseball bat, or knives;**
- **Kingston Neighborhood Watch Walks will never challenge anyone or endanger the members or other residents in any way.**
- **Kingston Neighborhood Watch will always carry a pad and pencil, a camera either video or still, and a flashlight if it is dark;**
- **Kingston Neighborhood Watch Walks will always be courteous and helpful to residents of the area being patrolled: including cleaning up trash and garbage and identifying neighbors at risk .**
- **Someone on each walk will keep Neighborhood Walk logs and files any necessary reports with the local law enforcement agency and their Ward Stewards.**

- **Neighborhood Walks will always have a fully charged cell phone on at least 3 working people in each group.**
- **Neighborhood Walks will never be in groups less than four persons**

Remember that citizen patrols can take on extra duties, such as safety escort services, identifying neighborhood nuisance concerns, monitoring graffiti sites, checking on homebound residents, and reporting abandoned vehicles at any time.

In Closing...

Lastly, I would like to say that by using this guide, you will be more prepared to face the challenges this city has to deal with now and in the future. This is a collection of information found on the net, as well as items that Neighborhood Watch Groups of Kingston NY, Inc. think could be of use to its members and the city. This is only SOME of the things you can do to protect your family and friends. If we were to put all information and tools out there in the guide it would be about 10 inches thick and no one would bother reading it all. We put topics in here that we thought would be the most helpful.

We would like to thank all of you for your support and extend an open hand to welcome you to the new watch and hope that you will all open your hand and take control of your neighborhood, block, ward and this historic city! **YOU** are making a difference by simply having a copy of this guide!!

For more Information, Contact:

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CREDITS AND SUPPORT:

City of Kingston NY <http://ci.kingston.ny.us/>

Kingston Police Dept. <http://www.kingston-ny.gov/content/76/78/921/default.aspx>

Ulster County Sheriff's Dept. <http://www.kingston-ny.gov/content/76/78/921/default.aspx>

USA On Watch <http://www.usaonwatch.org/>

National Crime Prevention Council <http://www.ncpc.org/>

Kingston Landlord Support <http://kingstonlandlordsupport.org/>

Community Involvement Training: A course in community renewal
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And many, many other, without your help, none of this would be possible!

Created for the people of the City of Kingston NY by the people

We reserve the right to revise this guide as needed to fit the needs of the watch.