

Neighborhood Crime Watch & E-CrimeWatch

Neighborhood Crime Watch programs in the City of Charleston can be tailored to the needs of your community. The central requirements for being Certified as a Crime Watch in the City are that there are:

- 1) A **primary contact person** (may be the Neighborhood president, or complex manager, or Crime Watch Coordinator or Chairperson, or in the case of a small area, a single Block Captain)
- 2) A **communication network** (door-to-door, phone-tree, or e-mail), up-to-date
- 3) A **presentation** or method of instruction (handouts, electronic, presentation to group) where the majority of residents have been instructed on Crime Prevention and reporting. This includes steps to take to deter crime around their home and street, how to recognize and report suspicious activity.

Historically we have stayed with the traditional pen & paper program of a Crime Watch Committee, Block Captains in each section, with guide booklets, Family Information Forms, phone trees, and live meetings. While we still like this format, and in some neighborhoods it is still the most practical, we are recognizing the electronic and mobile lifestyles of the majority of neighborhoods.

We will now be offering what can be called E-CrimeWatch. The traditional program will still be there for those who prefer it. Call 769-7407 for details.

While there is no substitute for live people looking out the windows or watching from the front porch, the benefits of the electronic communications are numerous. E-CrimeWatch somewhat eliminates the need for so many Block Captain volunteers, since their primary purpose was to pass on information by phone or door-to-door flyers to neighbors. E-mail, Cell and Text systems are now available to manage membership communication as well as emergency notifications and crime listings.

One such alert service we have been offering for several years is the **www.CrimeWeb.net** system, where citizens register free at the CrimeWeb website to receive Community Information alerts generated by this office. These include lists and maps of recent criminal activity (separated by patrol Team areas), scam alerts, meeting and presentation announcements. You can also go back into the website and research up to a year under "Search Alerts". Any individual can sign up to receive these alerts. These are simple one-way messages.

A more capable and involved **E-Crimewatch** resource for your neighborhood, complex, or even just your block is the **www.LinkingCommunities.com** system. LinkingCommunities is based in Simpsonville, SC, and was begun by a former Crime Prevention officer. They offer free website hosting to neighborhoods. (Your neighborhood may already have a website service you are satisfied with. In that

case you can still use the system as a link/portal on you website to help manage the association and/or E-CrimeWatch.) Simply visit the **www.LinkingCommunities.com** website and click on the icon for neighborhoods. They will walk you through the process of creating your page. By clicking on the **CrimeWatch portal** icon, the Crime Prevention office will also be notified of your existence (see next paragraph). You can then either notify your residents/members to sign-up individually, or you can upload lists of your residents' e-mails. They will then receive invitations to join. The neighborhood/group administrator of your website then approves or denies membership in your site for internal communications such as message boards, community calendars, classifieds, etc, making sure that all members are actually residents or owners. As members register, their contact information is available for membership and/or CrimeWatch communications, based on privacy settings they select. This all helps you manage your neighborhood association, complex, or block.

Finally, you may use either the CrimeWatch Portal on the Linking Communities site or go to the **www.Charleston-PD.org** website, click the **E-CrimeWatch** portal which takes you to our information on the LinkingCommunities.com system. After you fill in some information, you will be asked if you want to be recognized as a Crime Watch community. If you check the box, it notifies the Charleston Police Crime Prevention office of your request. We will contact you and upon approval, you will begin to receive crime alerts which will also be forwarded to residents whom you approve to register as members of your site. You can develop your neighborhood or group's web-page, it is even possible to duplicate the look of your current page. The format allows you to turn on and off different features.

You can at any point also call the Crime Prevention office at 769-7407 or e-mail CrimePrevention@ci.charleston.sc.us to arrange a presentation to your membership.

What about Crime Watch signs?

New signs will only be issued only *after* a neighborhood has been certified as active by the Crime Prevention office, according to the three factors listed above. Contact the Crime Prevention office directly for procedures.