



HOW TO OBSERVE

“WE LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER” is the key to Neighborhood Watch success.

Observation, looking out for each other, is a skill honed through diligent practice. Watching includes both seeing suspicious activity and also listening for suspicious sound.

Here are 10 good tips on how to observe:

Knowledge

1 By knowing who belongs in each house, their hours of work, their automobiles, helpers who come into their homes regularly, you can observe what is happening in your neighborhood and easily become suspicious of anything that does not fit your neighbor’s habits. This information should be available from your **Neighborhood Watch Family Data Sheet Summary.**

Secrecy

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2 Observe as secretly as possible. If something suspicious is happening, do not make the suspicious person aware that you are watching them. Look out for your neighbor __ be the eyes, and the ears, of your local law enforcement agency. But remember, you are the eyes and ears, **not** the strong arm of the law. Don’t confront a suspect **Call your police or sheriff.**

At Home

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3 Observe from your home. Whether you live in a house, a mobile home, an apartment or a condominium, you are the one determining which

locations are best for observing normal and suspicious activity. Ideal locations for observing include, but are not limited to, upstairs windows, windows that face the street, windows that allow you to observe the alley, garages, back doors and your neighbors’ yards.

On Foot

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4 Observe on foot as you walk or jog through your neighborhood. Commit as much as your **Neighborhood Watch Family Data Sheet Summary** to memory as you can. Memorize the check lists of Suspicious Activities and Sounds. Be alert to anything unusual happening in your neighborhood. Know your neighbors and your neighborhood. Practice what you have memorized by mentally reviewing what you know as you pass each neighbor’s house.

Car or Bicycle

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5 Observe by car or bicycle. This method of observation takes you further from your home and you must rely on your knowledge of **Suspicious**

Activities and Sounds. Practice what is needed to report a Suspect Vehicle or Person. Practice license number memorization. Be alert and be prepared to call your police or sheriff if you recognize anything suspicious.

Be Prepared

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6 Prepare yourself by having binoculars, including night vision binoculars. These are especially useful in rural and low-lit areas. A cellular phone will be useful in some areas, a CB or radio in others. If you are patrolling, which many Neighborhood Watch groups do, these are especially important.

You are the eyes and ears, *not* the strong arm of the law.

At Night

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7 When observing at night, don't look directly at what you are observing. If you look to the side, or above or below what you are observing, your vision will be more clear than if you looked directly at the subject. Also, prepare yourself

by having a small, powerful flashlight, if you need to use it without arousing suspicion. Mag-Lite is an especially good brand.

Trust Your Judgment

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8 Recognize and understand what you are observing. Practice observation techniques. Put them together with your ability to evaluate, deduct, organize your thinking and make judgments. Recognize when to call for help. When your judgment (instinct) tells you something wrong is happening or is about to happen, **CALL IMMEDIATELY – DON'T HESITATE.**

Notes

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9 The written word, with dates, times and properly written notes, is crucial to your reporting and following up on the criminal activities of any suspects. First, your memory is clearer when you write down,

immediately, what you see, logging the time of your notes. If you remember something else later, note it also, with the time. Record the suspect's description and activity, any license plate number of a vehicle, anything you might be called upon to report. Always keep a notebook and pen or pencil with you.

Practice

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10 Practice. Practice. Practice. Like any technique, practice makes perfect. Use your head to assimilate all you are exposed to and evaluate what you see and hear. No athlete, no pilot, no bookkeeper, not anyone, can perform up to their utmost without practice. You will learn a great deal in your Neighborhood Watch training. Practice what you learn.

Suspect Something?

Call immediately!

Don't Hesitate

RECOGNIZING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

What is suspicious and when do you call the police?

Suspicious activity is anything that looks like it could be connected with criminal behavior – someone casing a neighborhood, forcing open a door, grabbing a child; screaming or pounding coming from a nearby residence or apartment; of strong chemical odors coming from an inappropriate building, are but a handful of examples. If the activity is or appears to be threatening to property or people, **immediately** report the suspicious activity by calling 9 – 1 – 1. Time is critical in apprehending criminals. It is better to be overly-suspicious than to let a criminal get away.

Following is a list of suspicious activities and the criminal activity that might be happening:

PEOPLE

A person, persons, groups of your people, adult(s) or gang(s):

- gathering (loitering) for an extended or unusual period of time.
Possible burglary, arson or drug dealing.

- behaving strangely.
Possibly on drugs or preparing to do some illegal activity.

- with any sort of weapon
Possibly planning any number of crimes.

- carrying, concealing or transporting anything unusual.
Possibly burglar carrying stolen property.

- looking into cars.
Possibly casing cars for theft of car or its contents.

- wearing clothing, bandannas, caps, or other attire that could spell trouble.
Possible gang activity.

- selling or conducting business on a street corner, park or other place where business is not licensed.

- running, especially if carrying something of value.
Possible suspect fleeing scene of crime.

- running, especially at night, for no apparent reason.
Possible suspect fleeing scene of crime.

- creating any type of disturbance
Disturbing the Peace or covering up noise of some other activity.

- going door to door, especially if someone goes to the rear of the residence.
Possibly casing the neighborhood.

- loiters around schools, parks or on your street.
Possible burglar, sex offense, drugs or arson.

- create much foot traffic to and from a particular place, short visits.
Possible drugs, vice or fencing operation.

- screams for help.
Possible rape, medical emergency, robbery, assault or fire.

- offering items for sale at extremely low prices.
Possibly trying to sell stolen property.

- an older man with young females or teenagers in an unusual place or for an unusual period of time.

Possible sex crimes of seeking or pimping (soliciting customers) for the youngsters.

The list is endless:

Anyone doing anything that looks suspicious should be reported.

Trust your instincts.

Call immediately!

Don't Hesitate

VEHICLES

- An occupied vehicle parked for a long period of time.
Possibly casing the neighborhood.

- A vehicle driving around your neighborhood repeatedly, short visits.

Possibly casing the neighborhood, operating as a point for drug dealing, a sexual deviate or child molester waiting for their target, being a get-away car.

- Vehicle being loaded with valuables if parked by closed business or unoccupied house.

Possible burglary in progress.

- A parked car with the engine running.

Possible get-away car for burglary.

- Departing from a location at night with its lights off.

Possible burglar, assault violation or robber.

- Driving in a reckless manner or committing other serious traffic violations. Problems driving their vehicle, especially if it is an expensive model.

Possible stolen vehicle.

- The vehicle is in unusually bad condition, with signs of a recent accident, broken windows or bullet holes in the car.

Possibly involved in drive-by shooting or a hit and run accident.

- Business is being conducted out of the vehicle.

Possibly selling stolen items or drugs.

- An over-loaded vehicle that is heavily weighed down, parked, or traveling in your neighborhood.

Possible burglar.

- Persons detaching mechanical parts or accessories from vehicle.

Possible theft or vandalism in progress.

- Abandoned vehicle parked on block.

Possible stolen vehicle.

- Someone being forced into a vehicle.

Possible kidnapping, assault or attempted rape.

- Odd property seen in vehicles, such as TVs, stereos, weapons.

Possible stolen property.

- Locked vehicle that someone is trying to forcibly enter.

Possible theft of car or contents in progress.



Older children or adults, who are not from the neighborhood, bicycling randomly or repeatedly without a purposeful destination.

Possible theft of homes and/or garages.

SUSPICIOUS SOUNDS

Using your ears to detect suspicious activities is very helpful in combating crime. Sounds may only last a few seconds and may go undetected. Here are some sounds which require close attention, and reporting:

SCREAMS FOR HELP

Always assume the scream is real and someone desperately needs help. Quickly try to determine the location, source and nature of the scream and **immediately** call the police or sheriff. Heroes can be wounded or killed. Remember that apprehension is the job of your police.

CONTINUOUS SCREAMING

This type of screaming probably is a result of someone being beaten, hurt or mistreated. Especially listen for victim's cries of "Oh's" and "Ow's". Quickly try to determine the location, source and nature of the scream and immediately call the police or sheriff.

SCREAMING AND CURSING

This type of screaming is probably a domestic violence incident – between husband and wife, parent and child, two people who are intent on hurting each other but not in a life-threatening way.

Determine the location, source and nature of the scream and immediately call the police or sheriff.

GUN SHOT SOUNDS

Immediately call the police or sheriff. Provide as much information as to the number of shots and their source (location).

ALARMS ACTIVATED

Fire, home-burglary, business and car alarms must always be considered as real. Determine the location, source and nature of the alarm and call the police or sheriff.

BREAKING GLASS

If you hear the sound of breaking glass **immediately** call the police or sheriff. This is the most common method of forced entry into a home, apartment or automobile.

LOUD MUSIC

Loud music is usually an annoyance and you can report it as any other nuisance. However, it is often used to cover up other criminal activities. If you hear loud music covering the cry of a screaming person, **immediately** call the police or sheriff.

FORCING, PRYING OR POUNDING SOUNDS

If something is being forced, pried or pounded you should determine the location, source and nature of the sounds and if your suspicion is aroused, **immediately** call the police or sheriff.

DOGS BARKING

Continuous barking of a dog in an unusual manner is cause for alarm. Determine the location of the dog and call the police or sheriff.

Trust your instincts.

Call immediately!

Don't Hesitate