

# HOME SECURITY

&

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

**A GUIDE FOR PROTECTING YOUR PROPERTY**

*Prepared by a Neighbor Who Cares.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

In Jackson Township as a whole, and in Arbor Gate in particular, we are dependent primarily upon the Pennsylvania State Police for protection. The local troopers do a fine job, especially given the area they must cover — all of Lebanon County and, at times, with limited staffing. Therefore, we need to work together as much as possible to promote crime prevention. This starts in our individual homes. **Burglars look for what are called "TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY."**

Through cooperative efforts, we can eliminate or at least decrease the chances of becoming a TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY. Burglary is one of the most preventable of all crimes. Each one of us is the person who can best prevent a home burglary.

This pamphlet is designed to make our residents aware of the many ways to improve the safety and security of our neighborhood and make our homes a less likely target of criminals. It shows us what to look for, when to call the police and even how to make our homes less vulnerable to a would-be burglar. Any barriers (physical, perceptual or psychological) that can be placed in the path of a criminal will lessen the chances of our Arbor Gate homes becoming the next target.

Please incorporate the suggestions and techniques in this pamphlet to better secure your home.

Join with your neighbors and help each other prevent the possibility of crime in Arbor Gate. The State Police are available to help us get started and to assist our continuing efforts to deter crime. They would rather prevent a crime than investigate one after it has occurred. Successful efforts to combat crime require the cooperative involvement of police and citizens. The police cannot be everywhere. Many crimes would not be committed if more citizens were alert to suspicious activity and notified the police.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM**

A Neighborhood Watch Program discourages criminals from even considering our community. Some neighborhoods may be more susceptible to crime than others; however, all should consider establishing a Neighborhood Watch Program of some type. There are several benefits:

**1. PROMOTES NEIGHBORLINESS**

Neighborhood Watch encourages residents to interact with each other, sharing information about work schedules, vacation plans, types of vehicles belonging to their households, etc. It also encourages neighbors to observe the property of others and to attend meetings designed to strengthen neighborhood safety and security.

**2. PROMOTES GREATER AWARENESS OF CRIME**

Home security and personal safety are enhanced as residents become more aware of the threat of crime. Exposure to crime prevention techniques improves a citizen's ability to remove and reduce opportunities for criminals to act.

### **3. ENHANCES REPORTING OF SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES**

Residents are more aware of who belongs in the community and are more inclined to report suspicious persons and activities to the police. Typically, as the calls for suspicious activity increase, the actual number of crimes committed decreases because of the added police presence.

### **4. ACTS AS A WARNING TO CRIMINALS**

Neighborhood Watch signs alert criminals that residents are concerned about crime and will call the police when suspicious activity is observed. However, signs alone are of little deterrent value when not backed up by an active Neighborhood Watch Program.

### **5. REDUCES CRIME RATES**

Crime statistics show Neighborhood Watch Programs have aided police departments in reducing residential burglary by almost 90 percent from 1981 to 1999. This occurred even while populations increased. In addition to reductions in residential burglary, Neighborhood Watch Programs have contributed to substantial declines in theft of property, vandalism, fraud, sexual assaults and even traffic-related offenses.

The establishment of a Neighborhood Watch Program in a low-crime area is added assurance it will remain safe. Crime is rarely stationary and often moves from one neighborhood to another, e.g., Lebanon to Myerstown to Richland, etc.

Although the prevention of crime is the principal benefit of a Watch Program, the promotion of neighborliness and a sense of community also is a major factor in the prevention of crime and the success of the program.

## **CALLING THE POLICE**

### **1. WHY CALL THE POLICE?**

You risk nothing if you call the police and you are wrong. Consider what you risk if you fail to call the police and you are correct that a crime is being committed. Don't dwell on your possible embarrassment if your call should prove to be unfounded. Think instead of what could have happened had you not called. You or your loved ones could become the victims of a criminal act.

### **2. WHEN TO CALL THE POLICE?**

Whenever you observe suspicious events, even though you may not be the only person observing them, call the police. **Never think the next person will do**

**what you should be doing.** The police would rather get numerous calls on the same event than none at all. Often citizens fail to call because they are not sure if what they see is suspicious. If you are in doubt, call the police immediately. Valuable police response time is lost if you wait to talk it over with friends or neighbors.

## **2. HOW DO YOU CALL THE POLICE?**

Use the police, fire, and rescue emergency number, **911**, for crimes actually in progress and events that are life threatening or immediately damaging to property. Call the **non-emergency number** for Pennsylvania State Police (**717**) **865-2194**, to report crimes that already have occurred and when the perpetrator is no longer in the area, or to advise police of suspicious activity.

## **3. WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD YOU PROVIDE TO THE POLICE?**

You will be asked for your name, address and phone number. This information is requested in case additional contact with you is necessary. Any information provided to the police department is kept in confidence. If you do not want personal contact with the responding officer, just say so.

The most important information needed by the police is:

- What happened?
- When?
- Where?
- Is anyone hurt?
- License numbers and vehicle descriptions
- Direction of travel
- Description of suspect(s)
- Are weapons involved?

By acting quickly and calmly, your request for police service could prevent a crime, help to identify suspects involved in other crimes, or deter a criminal act by letting potential suspects know that you and your neighbors are alert to suspicious activity, suspicious vehicles and suspicious persons.

## **WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS?**

A stranger enters your neighbor's home while your neighbor is away or someone crosses your neighbor's yard with no apparent lawful purpose; someone tries to open a neighbor's door; or a moving truck or van pulls up to a neighbor's home while they are gone. **Remember, burglaries often occur at times when they should be most obvious --- in broad daylight, in full view of observers and with no effort at subterfuge.**

Someone carrying property such as television sets, radios, stereos, etc., at an unusually late hour or in an unusual place, especially if it does not appear that the property is newly purchased.

The sound of shattering glass could signal a possible burglary, vandalism or larceny in progress.

Anyone peering into vehicles while walking down a street, or someone removing tags, gasoline or parts from a car. Someone attempting to enter a car using a coat hanger or other device. Never assume that it is the owner who has locked the keys in the car. Be suspicious of anyone tampering with the hood or trunk of a car.

An improperly parked car or an abandoned vehicle, or someone leaving one car and driving away in another — these may be signs of a stolen vehicle.

Anyone being forced into a vehicle could be the victim of abduction.

Persons loitering around schools, parks and isolated areas, or in the neighborhood. Loiterers could be possible sex offenders or burglars.

Anyone on school, church or cemetery property after dark and not taking part in an approved activity.

Business transactions conducted from a vehicle and often involving juveniles or a steady flow of strangers to and from a particular house on a regular basis at unusual times or late hours. This could indicate drug sales or sales of stolen goods.

Offers of goods or repair work at unusually low prices could indicate stolen property or some kind of fraud.

All fights, screams, and loud noises (such as explosions) should be reported as possible crimes. Life-threatening events could be taking place.

Door-to-door solicitors are not permitted in Arbor Gate. However, utility and repair personnel should provide proper identification before being admitted into your home.

## **YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

It has been proven that in neighborhoods where citizens have joined together to look out for each other's safety, the incidence of burglaries has been significantly reduced. Knowing who your neighbors are is the first step in this program

### ***Three additional elements of a Neighborhood Watch Program:***

#### ***1. Property Identification***

Property identification discourages thieves and makes disposal of stolen property more difficult.

When recovered, stolen property can be identified; it can be used as evidence against the thief and also can be returned by police to its owner.

Engrave your complete driver's license number, followed by **PA**, on your TV, VCR, cameras, etc. Use of the driver's license number is recommended because of the speed with which the property owner's name and address can be obtained through police computer systems.

## 2. *Home Security Self Check*

Inspect the locks, doors and windows of your home. Check exterior lighting, landscaping and other factors affecting the protection of your home from burglary. Dusk to dawn exterior lighting is the least expensive, most effective safety measure you can take. Dusk to dawn bulbs are now available at most Big Box Stores, Home Depot, Lowes, etc.

## 3. Help Establish a Patrol Watch

### ***Purpose of a Patrol Watch Program:***

The purpose of a Patrol Watch Program is to use highly visible citizen observers to deter crime. Patrol members report crimes and suspicious situations to the police. Patrol members also participate in educating their community in public safety practices. Join with your neighbors in volunteering your eyes and your ears on a regular basis to watch your neighborhood and report anything suspicious to the Pennsylvania State Police. Thieves and vandals are likely to go elsewhere when they know a Neighborhood Watch is "all eyes" for them!

### Patrol Procedures

1. Community patrols observe, record and report. Patrol members **DO NOT** become involved with a suspect.
2. The patrol area should be well defined.
3. Patrol members must participate in a training session provided by the Pennsylvania State Police.
4. Patrol teams should consist of at least two members equipped with cell phones, flashlight, pens or pencils.
5. Patrol members do not possess police authority. Each member is liable for civil and criminal charges should he or she exceed their authority.
6. Patrol members **DO NOT** challenge anyone. The patrol's visible presence should be a deterrent to most criminal activity. If a suspicious situation is found, the patrol should call the police, using the methods set forth in their training.
7. Patrol members **DO NOT** pursue vehicles or suspects nor attempt to enforce traffic violations.
8. Patrol teams should patrol in a random fashion rather than in an observable pattern.

9. Patrol members **DO NOT** carry firearms, nightsticks, mace, or any type of weapon.
10. Patrol members **DO NOT** report for duty under the influence of Intoxicants.
11. Members violating patrol procedures may be banned from participation in the community patrol.
12. Patrol members should take notes on suspicious situations. The notes may become evidence if the situation becomes a criminal matter. The notes should be neat and legible. A copy should be given to the Watch Coordinator and the original saved for at least one year. The notes might be subpoenaed by the court or used by the patrol member for recall during court testimony.

## **YOUR HOME – AREAS OF CONCERN**

### ***1. Appearance of Occupancy:***

Maintain an appearance of occupancy, especially when your residence is vacant. This is essential to thwarting burglary attempts. Timers, which automatically regulate the interior lighting of a home, can create such a deception. Timers should be used while on vacation, when you are out to dinner, or even during the day while you are at work.

One type of automatic timer has a 24-hour dial and allows you to set an on-and-off time to coincide with normal light usage in your home. These timers simply plug into the wall, and the lamp you want to use is plugged into the timer. Another type of timer replaces the wall switch and may be used for exterior, as well as interior, lighting.

For the most realistic deception, several timers and lamps should be used to simulate occupancy. For instance, a radio and lamp in the living room might be on from dusk until 11:00 p.m. At 11:00 p.m. a lamp would go on in the bathroom until 11:30 p.m. and then a bedroom lamp would be on from 11:30 p.m. to midnight. This would indicate to anyone watching the house that it was occupied.

During the day, leave drapes and shades in their normal positions – the way you have them when you are at home. (And do not leave easily movable valuables in sight close to the windows.)

Although it's a sad reflection of our times, you should have someone "house sit" when no one is home during a period of bereavement. Newspaper obituaries provide burglars with the necessary information to select targets of opportunity.

### ***2. Exterior Lighting:***

Exterior lighting is extremely important to residential security. Each exterior doorway should be lighted to prevent burglars from concealing their activities.

Yards and windows should be lighted to prevent concealment. Ornamental porch and post lamps eliminate blind spots at night.

Yard lights and entrance lights can be equipped with sensors and timers that turn the lights on at dusk and off at dawn.

A motion detector can be installed to turn lights on when someone enters the grounds. The lights reset after one to three minutes.

### **3. House Numbers:**

Make sure that police, firefighters and paramedics can find your house in time of an emergency. Detailed maps of Arbor Gate are still missing from many local maps. Give emergency personnel clear directions to your location. Turn on all outside lights and open your front garage door. Turn on garage lights. Your house numbers should be illuminated, if possible.

### **4. Landscaping:**

Plan your landscaping with both privacy and security in mind. Keep doorways, windows, and porches clear when planting bushes and flowers. Walks and driveways should not offer concealment to intruders. Remember, the bushes which provide you with privacy, also give a burglar a place to hide. A well-maintained lawn indicates someone is home even when you are away. Arrange to have your lawn mowed when you are gone.

### **5. Sliding Doors:**

Sliding glass doors present a major security problem if they do not have the proper locks and if special steps are not taken to prevent the removal of the doors.

A sliding glass door is lifted into position when installed and therefore, must be lifted from the track to be removed. To prevent this, if your door slides on the inside, insert three 1- $\frac{1}{4}$ " pan head (large head) sheet metal screws into the top of the doorframe at both ends and the middle. These screws should be adjusted so that the door barely clears them when operated. This will make it more difficult to lift the door from the track.

Locks also are available for sliding glass doors. These feature either a pin that goes through both doors or a clamp that fastens with two turn screws to the top channel. A device called a "**Charlie Bar**" should be used in addition to any locks because it will provide a visible deterrent to the burglar. "**Charlie Bars**" are available at most hardware or home improvement stores. This device is mounted in the channel of the non-sliding door and is swung into place to prevent movement of the sliding door.



## 6. Locks:

A high-quality, one-inch deadbolt lock should be installed on every outside door. The doorknob lock alone is inadequate; it can be jimmed fairly easily, whereas the deadbolt cannot.

## WHEN YOU ARE AWAY OR ON VACATION

- Let your neighbor know you are going to be away and where you can be reached.
- Ask a neighbor to pick up your mail, packages and newspapers. (Or stop your mail and newspapers.)
- Ask a neighbor to mow your lawn in summer or shovel your walk in winter. (Or arrange for Arbor Gate to do it.)
- Ask your neighbor to use your trashcans or set some of their refuse at the curb in front of your home on trash collection day.
- Invite your neighbor to park a car in your driveway to give your home an even more lived-in appearance.
- Make your home look like you are there. Lights turned off and on by timers give your home a lived-in look when you are away.
- Never leave your home unlocked, even for a brief trip to the store or a visit to the neighbor across the street. Many homes have been burglarized in just such short periods of time.
- Don't hide a key outside your home. Leave that extra key with a trusted neighbor or friend. If you have deadbolt cylinder locks, you must use a key to lock the door and can't possibly lock yourself out.
- Plug a radio into a timer that is set to go on when you are away. Set the radio to an all-talk station, and leave the volume low. This will give the would-be burglar the impression you're talking to someone. **Light and noise are burglars' worst enemies.**

## **REMEMBER:**

***A THIEF WANTS TO TAKE THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE!***