

We Can All Contribute to Neighborhood Safety!

Although our neighborhood is a relatively low-crime area compared to some others, we are not immune to crime. There have been burglaries of cars, houses, and backyard sheds; we have seen a few instances of gang-related graffiti; and occasionally some “iffy” people have been noted in the neighborhood who seem to be watching our houses to see when we are home and when we are not. This is very disturbing to us all.

Our North Coronado Heights Neighborhood Association volunteer patrollers do their best to be a watchful presence on our neighborhood streets, but they need everyone’s eyes and ears to supplement their efforts.

We’d like to suggest some common-sense steps we all can take that should help discourage potential law breakers and protect our neighborhood.

Get to know your immediate neighbors. This means the five houses nearest yours: the three

across the street and the one on either side of you. Create a tight-knit group whose members are willing to look out for each other. You may build outward from this small area, but at a minimum make a commitment to these five.

Stay watchful. Our crime patrol volunteers vary their hours, conducting patrols in the mornings, afternoons, and at night. They can’t be on duty more than a few hours a week, however. This makes it critically important for residents to stay vigilant and supplement the efforts of the crime

WANT TO BECOME A PATROLLER?

If you’d like to join our patrol project, email us at northcoronado@gmail.com. We’ll let you know what’s involved and give you the date of the next scheduled training.

patrol teams. You can be a great asset just by looking out the window a few times a day. Take note of people sitting in parked cars—are they watching someone’s house? Listen for loud mufflers, screeching tires, or unusual noises. You don’t have to leave the security of your own home, just observe through a window. As you are driving in or out of the neighborhood, occasionally take an extra loop around your block and note anything that looks suspicious along your route.

Be aware of what’s “normal” for your neighbors. Are your neighbors always at work during the day or is someone usually home during the daytime? What do their cars look like? Do they have a lawn care service? If so, what kind of truck does the company drive? What day do those workmen come? Do the neighbors have a regular visitor such as a home health nurse? What does that person look like? Do the neighbors take a newspaper, and if so, is it being taken in each

morning? When they go out of town, do they ask someone to get their newspapers and mail? If not, offer to do so for them.

Use your locks. The days of saying “oh, we never even lock our doors...” should be firmly in the past. Keep all your home’s doors locked, even when you are inside. Use dead-bolt locks with a minimum of a one-inch throw. Keep your windows and your gate locked, too.

Prevent car break-ins by always closing car windows and locking car doors when you park outside, whether it’s day or night. Never leave valuables—cell phones, briefcases, cash, packages—in plain sight in the car. These items are very tempting to a thief. Don’t leave a garage door opener visible in the car.

Always keep your garage door closed. Even if you go inside and leave it open for only a few minutes, you are giving a criminal time to enter and quickly carry off tools or other valuables you store in your garage.

Beware of strangers.

Don't open the door to visitors you don't recognize and aren't expecting. If you feel you must open the door, ask for ID. Home invaders and thieves often pose as salesmen, utility company representatives, charity workers, and other legitimate visitors. They may simply be trying to see who is home, when they are home, and whether there is a dog. They may try to convince you to let them inside; this may be a ploy to gather information about whether your home is a good target.

Consider installing a security system. Merely the presence of a security system may be enough to deter a would-be burglar or vandal from crossing your property line. If a crime does occur, video from a doorbell camera or other device can be invaluable to police when they are conducting their investigation.

Use outdoor lights on your property. See to it that you have lighting that illuminates your home's entry points and your parked cars. Some outdoor lighting is activated by motion if someone

approaches; some is capable of automatically coming on at dusk and going off again at dawn.

Let your landscape work for you. Keep trees and shrubs around your house trimmed so that they do not offer a hiding place for someone who is not authorized to be on your property.

Call police if you see anything suspicious. We sometimes feel we don't want to "bother" the police, especially if we aren't sure that what we saw is significant. It's their job to determine whether a crime has occurred or is likely to occur—allow them to use their expertise.

Call police even if the incident that has occurred seems minor. Sometimes we think it's not necessary to call police if no real harm was done. For example, if you can tell

someone has been in your backyard but nothing was taken, you might be tempted just to let it go. Don't! Police need an accurate picture of what's going on in the neighborhood so they can devote adequate resources to policing our area. Just because nothing was stolen from your backyard this time doesn't mean it's okay with you if the criminals browse around back there.

If you see a crime in progress, stay calm and be observant. As long as you can safely do so, try to get as good a look as possible if you think you are seeing a crime occurring. Note how many people there are, their appearance, and their clothing. See what, if anything, they are carrying, and whether there is a vehicle involved. Get as specific a description of the vehicle's make, model, and color as you

can safely manage. If you can do so, get a license plate number, but don't take any chances with your personal safety in order to get close. Take note of the time of day. If the criminals leave the area, try to see which way they went, if you can do so safely. Never approach the suspects or intercede in their activity.

Take note of any vandalism and report it immediately. Vandalism can take several forms—graffiti on public or private property, destruction or defacement of traffic signs, stolen street signs, broken windows or slashed tires on parked cars, and other mindless destruction. Vandalism cheapens the neighborhood and, if left unrepaired, sends a message that "no one cares about this place." Graffiti is often the first sign that gangs are taking over a neighborhood, as "taggers" use it to mark their territories and challenge rival gangs. Vandalism is a crime and should be reported immediately—even if you think it's probably just bored kids. Send a message that we do care, and won't allow our neighborhood to be defaced.

NUMBERS TO CALL...

For immediate response to a crime or suspicious incident, **dial 911** and be ready to give the exact address and describe the situation calmly and succinctly. For a non-emergency matter, such as to request additional neighborhood police patrols, **dial 405-231-2121**.