



Within the past fifteen years, the number of people residing in Douglas County has more than doubled. Current population is approximately 50,000 residents. Along with the full time resident population, it is estimated on any given day during the summer months, some 4,400 people are visiting Douglas County. The unfortunate side effect of such resident growth and visitor population is the increase in crime.

The majority of crimes committed here in Douglas County are what law enforcement refers to as property crimes. These include theft, burglary, fraud and other crimes in which the victim is not physically accosted or placed in danger. Many of these crimes against property are crimes of opportunity. Crimes of opportunity occur when the victim has failed to take precautionary measures to prevent crime from occurring.

Residents can greatly reduce the chances that they will be victimized by crime by taking just a few small preventative steps to protect themselves.

- Secure your property. Don't leave bicycles, garden tools, construction tools or other items of value unattended outside your home or in the bed of your truck.
- Lock your home while away. Secure your doors and windows when away from the home. Keep the garage door closed when unattended. Keep side gates locked when away from home for more than one day. Keep outside lights on at night or use motion detector lighting.
- Arrange for neighbors to watch your home, collect your mail, gather your newspapers and maintain your yard while away on vacation.
- Lock your car. Don't leave items of value visible inside your car.
- Protect your identity. Do not release any information about yourself or your banking or credit card information without first confirming that the requestor has a legal purpose. Confirm the legitimacy of anyone who claims to be affiliated with your bank or credit establishments. This is particularly important in our age of computer banking.
- Suspicious people, vehicles or activity should be reported to the Sheriff's Office. The non-emergency number for the Sheriff's Office is 782-5126.
- Residents can further discourage crime in their neighborhoods by forming a Neighborhood Watch Program.

For further information on how to protect yourself and your community, contact Sergeant Jim Halsey, Douglas County Sheriff's Office Public Information Officer (775-782-9931).

What is Neighborhood Watch?

In essence, Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that stresses education and common sense. It teaches citizens how to help themselves by identifying and reporting suspicious activity in their neighborhoods. In addition, it provides citizens with the opportunity to make their neighborhoods safer and improve the quality of life.

Neighborhood Watch groups typically focus on observation and awareness as a means of preventing crime and employ strategies that range from simply promoting social interaction and "watching out for each other" to active patrols by groups of citizens.

Most neighborhood crime prevention groups are organized around a block or a neighborhood, and are started with assistance from a law enforcement agency. Participation is strictly voluntary, with participants donating their time and effort to make their neighborhood safe. Many groups use street signs to show the presence of the program in the area, to potentially deter would-be criminals.

All Neighborhood Watches share one foundational idea: bringing community members together to establish control of their neighborhoods and promote an increased quality of life that reduces the crime rate in that area. Involving community members in Neighborhood Watch programs decreases opportunity for criminals to commit crime rather than attempting to change criminal behavior or motivation.

Today's Neighborhood Watch Program is an effective means of crime control and neighborhood cohesiveness. While not all of the programs in place today go by the same name, they all accomplish the same goal: to bring community members together to decrease the opportunity for crime to occur.

What Neighborhood Watch is not.

Neighborhood Watch is not a vigilante program. It is not intended for citizens to involve themselves in detaining suspects, thereby put themselves in danger. Participants should strive to be good witnesses; leaving the detention of criminals to law enforcement officers.

Neighborhood Watch is not intended to pit neighbor against neighbor. If participants have problems with neighbors, they are encouraged to first attempt peaceable resolution with those neighbors before requesting law enforcement intervention.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH COORDINATOR

The Coordinator's job is crucial to the success of the program. This may be just the right job for a retiree or other individual who has extra time at home.

If at all possible, the coordinator should be someone other than a current Board Member of the Homeowners Association (this is recommended because many HOA Board members have had difficulties or disagreements with residents/tenants, and these past conflicts can often keep those residents/tenants from joining the Neighborhood Watch group).

Coordinator's responsibilities include:

- Expanding the program by providing Neighborhood watch information to other area residents.
- Maintaining a current list of participants; including names, addresses, home/work telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. This info is garnered from individual residents by the Block Captains, and provided to the Coordinator.
- Liaison between the Neighborhood Watch group and law enforcement.
- Liaison between the Neighborhood Watch group and (if fitting) the residential homeowners association.
- Arranging training for neighborhood crime prevention, detection and reporting.
- Obtaining and distributing crime prevention materials
- Involving others to develop specific crime prevention projects pertinent to the neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH BLOCK CAPTAIN

Block Captains should be designated for every 15-20 homes, or as best suited for coordination of neighbors based on street layout.

Block Captains should be directly involved with their neighbors, whether or not the neighbor is actively involved in the Neighborhood Watch program.

Block Captain's responsibilities include:

- Acting as a liaison between residents and the Coordinator.
- Assisting in the establishment of a group contact list by compiling a current list of owners/tenants names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses; and providing it too the Coordinator.
- Visiting with and inviting new residents to join the Neighborhood Watch program.
- Contacting each neighbor and participant as often as possible, however no less than once each quarter, to discuss neighborhood crime problems, needs, or suggestions of improvement.

Suspicious Activity

Suspicious activity is that event or combination of factors that leads you to believe something is amiss.

It could be something as simple as a barking dog in the middle of the night (is that uncommon for that animal?) or an unfamiliar vehicle that keeps cruising your neighborhood. Suspicious activity also includes people, particularly juveniles, loitering about late at night.

Suspicious activity may be defined as anything outside what would be considered "normal" in your neighborhood by the average resident of your neighborhood.

Keep in mind, suspicious activity may be a precursor to criminal activity, or it may be nothing at all. But unless it is checked out, no one will know for sure. Some examples are:

- A vehicle parked in the street, unattended, with the engine running.
- An unfamiliar vehicle or person at your neighbor's home while they're away or on vacation.
- A neighbor, who is generally very regimented in such things as closing the garage door or turning on/off lights at a particular hour, altering that conduct.
- Someone coming to your door and asking for a name unfamiliar to you (this is a common ploy used by thieves to see if anyone is home).
- An unfamiliar person loitering around a vehicle, or peering inside a vehicle or home window.
- An unfamiliar person loitering around a cluster mailbox (precursor to mail theft).
- Teenage kids or young adults loitering around a neighborhood with no apparent purpose or activity.
- Workers (construction laborers, gardeners, repairmen, etc...) loitering around a neighborhood or spending an excessive amount of time looking at residences in the area where they are supposed to be working.
- Abandoned vehicles or bicycles. Crooks need modes of transportation too.
- Loud noises or gunfire (could be hunters, could be criminals)

What to Do / What Not to Do

- **Do** call the Sheriff's Department dispatch to report crime or suspicious activity possibly related to crime.
- **Do Not** wait to report your observation until the following morning. The Sheriff's Office is open 24-7. You will not be disturbing us or taking deputies away from "more important" activities. If deputies have a priority call, they will handle that call first, and then be enroute to handle your call. Keep in mind that priority calls may come in AFTER your call, but require deputies respond to that call first because of the event (ie. in-progress crimes against persons, traffic accidents, child endangerment, etc...).
- **Do Not** assume someone else will call the Sheriff's Office. An example would be someone awakened in the middle of the night by what they believed to have been glass shattering, loud banging or a gunshot. If the Sheriff's Office only receives one call, the viewpoint will differ greatly than if we receive ten such calls.
- **Do Not** place yourself in harms way to confront the subject(s). Allow the deputies to handle the call; they have the training. Obviously if your safety is in jeopardy than take appropriate action.
- **Do** observe and keep dispatch informed of any changes (ie. weapons present, suspect fleeing scene, vehicle description, direction of travel, etc...)
- **Do Not** purchase magazine/book subscriptions from door to door salesmen. Especially those who identify themselves as students and are competing for prizes including tuition, travel, etc. More often than not, the subscription never arrives. Door to door salesmen must have a "Traveling Merchant" permit issued by the Sheriff's Office. To verify a permit, telephone the records division at 782-9933. The same goes for solicitors of charitable organizations and fundraisers. They must apply for and receive a permit from the Sheriff's Department. If valid, they will have a temp card.
- **Do Not** allow strangers into your home. People posing as solicitors may be attempting to "case" your home. The free carpet shampoo, furnace, roof or air conditioning inspection may not be so free after all. Do not allow strangers into your home to use your telephone, restroom or other such potential ruse.
- **Do** place a "No Solicitor" sign at the front of your property. A solicitor, even if licensed by Douglas County, would be in violation approaching a home with such a sign.

Anonymity

It is not required for you, the reporting party, to meet with responding deputies. Deputies may require additional information, especially if criminal activity is discovered, but in most cases, you do not have to worry about them coming to your home and thereby identifying you as the person who called. If you wish to remain anonymous, we can and do honor those requests. Let dispatch know.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HOME

Let's start at the perimeter of your property. Home intruders look for three things when selecting a target. An opportunity to commit a crime, an ability to get in and out of the home easily, and they prefer to do so without being seen.

Remember the three "D"s of prevention:

- **Deter:** Sound security practices, good locks and good lighting all serve to deter a home intruder. FBI statistics have shown that 65% of break-ins occur by forcing in the front, back or garage service door (not to mention the 12% of entries where burglars find your "hidden" key or simply walk in through an unlocked door).
- **Detect:** The possibility of detection is increased if you force an intruder to work where he can be seen.
- **Delay:** FBI statistics have shown that delaying an intruder for four minutes is generally sufficient in preventing entry into a home.

1) Perimeter fencing

- Having a secured fence surrounding your property restricts the easy in/easy out access to your home. Although costly, it is a great deterrent to thieves.
- Lock all access gates when away from your residence for longer than one day.

2) Lighting

- Proper illumination takes away the home intruder's ability to move in and out of your home without being seen.
- Invest in motion detector lights. They not only conserve electricity, but also warn you or your neighbor of a possible intruder.
- When an outdoor perimeter light is activated, it is an indication of detected movement and should be investigated.
- **Do not** step out of your home to investigate noises or the activation of a motion sensing light. Turn on other exterior lights and observe from a window before stepping outside.
- If you at all feel there may be an intruder on your property, trust your instincts and dial 911 without hesitation.

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3) Dogs

- A noisy canine is a huge deterrent to a home intruder. Suspects will likely be deterred because of two things:
 1. They are afraid of being bitten
 2. The animal's bark draws attention by neighbors. Home intruders like to come and go without detection.
- Keep in mind that a dog that barks obsessively is like a car alarm. After awhile, nobody cares, nobody pays attention, and nobody investigates. It's like the boy who cried wolf.
- "Beware of Dog" signs, even without the presence of an actual dog, can act as a deterrent.
- Home improvement and electronics stores now sell barking dog alarms known as "Electronic Watch Dog". You can also order them online. The alarm sounds like a large, angry dog barking. Set the alarm up behind your front door. The alarm uses radar technology to "see" through the door. Turn the alarm on, and when movement is detected, the alarm emits the ferocious barking sounds of a large dog. The closer the intruder gets; the louder and more frequent the barking becomes. As the intruder backs off, the barking decreases in intensity and frequency, stopping completely when movement is out of range.

4) Vegetation

- Keep plants and other obstructions from providing concealment at windows and doors. Maintain shrubbery at window level. Plant thorny vegetation near windows; it makes for an uncomfortable place of concealment.
- Don't place large pottery shelves or other furniture on your front porch that intruders can hide behind.

5) Neighbors

- Your neighbors are your best defense against home intrusion. Have them keep an eye on your house and property while away, and return the favor. Get to know your neighbors, their schedules and habits; that way you can detect things out of the ordinary and report it to law enforcement (ie. vehicles or persons that don't belong there).

Not all intruders are deterred by fences, lights, dogs, or even an established Neighborhood Watch program, therefore we'll discuss some tips on how to keep an intruder out of your home.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HOME

Keeping an intruder out of your home

1) Doors

Exterior doors should be constructed of solid core material and be at least 1- $\frac{3}{4}$ " in thickness. Hollow-core doors are easily breached.

- Install a viewer at the main entrance.
- Ensure all exterior hinges have no hinge-pins that can be removed.

2) Locks

There are many different types of door locks on the market. When choosing a lock for your home, do not compromise your safety for a small dollars savings. Choose quality locks. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has standards that measure security and durability of door locks. Locks and deadbolts are rated as Grade-1, Grade-2 and Grade-3; with Grade-1 being the highest and Grade-3 the lowest.

- Install quality Grade-1 deadbolts on all exterior doors. Deadbolts should have a minimum 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " throw in order to gain perch into the wooden stud behind the doorframe. Throw is the length that the deadbolt extends out past the edge of the door. Also, 3" screws should be used to fasten the strike plate through the door frame and into the stud or frame member.
- Most unlawful entries are made through an open or unlocked door or window. Lock your windows and doors when away from home! The most expensive lock is worthless unless it is used.
- Get in the habit of locking the front door when you're at home. If you have children or frequent comings and goings, choose to leave a rear door unlocked.
- If your door has glass panes, windows, or an animal access door within 40" of the lock, a double cylinder deadbolt is recommended, since burglars can gain entry simply by breaking out the glass or reaching up through the animal access door and unlocking the door from the inside. In an effort to prevent this, many homeowners install a double-cylinder deadbolt. A double cylinder deadbolt is operated with a key from both the exterior and interior of the home.

Safety Note: Unfortunately, this type lock creates safety concerns in case of an emergency when persons would need to get out of the house quickly. If the key is misplaced, occupants may waste time looking for the key to unlock the door. Because of this, most building codes do not allow this type of lock on residential doors, however to solve this conflict, manufacturers have developed a double-cylinder deadbolt with a feature called a captured key. With this feature, on the interior side of the door, the deadbolt lock has a thumb turn that can be removed from the lock, leaving just a keyhole. The idea is that when no one is home, there is no need for the thumb-turn. The last person to leave the house removes the thumb-turn and creates a double cylinder deadbolt condition.

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3) Sliding Glass Doors

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

- Placing a wooden dowel or bar in the track to prevent the door from being slid open is not a "fail safe" measure.
- A sliding glass door is lifted into position when installed and, therefore, can be lifted out and removed by an intruder.
- There are numerous security devices (locks and pins) sold at hardware stores to prevent this from occurring.
- Also, once the sliding door is installed, you could insert two or three sheet metal screws into the track just above the top of the door so it cannot be lifted out unless the door is opened and the screws removed.

4) Windows

Most windows, like sliding glass doors, are lifted into place when installed and are subject to being removed in the same fashion. Many of the locks used to secure sliding glass doors can also be used on track windows.

5) Garage Doors

Garage doors should always be closed – even when home, thereby removing visibility and opportunity for thieves to commit a crime. Special precautions should be taken to protect your garage door opener and the code contained therein.

- Do not allow others access to your garage door opener. Mechanics, valet attendants, etc... can record the code from your remote and return at a later time with a remote programmed to operate your door. Take it with you when leaving your vehicle at the shop, valet, etc... Newer openers have a random/roaming access code that prevents this.
- When planning to be away from home for an extended period (like vacation) remove any garage door openers from vehicles parked outside the home; so if a thief breaks into your vehicle, he doesn't also have access to your garage (and possibly interior of home from there).
- At all times when leaving your home, lock the walk-through door leading from the garage to the house. This makes it harder for an intruder to access your house, even if the intruder makes entry into the garage.