



### **Neighborhood Awareness and Crime Prevention**

Compiled suggestions from the Columbus Police Department

- 1) Join your neighborhood association so you can quickly and easily share information about what is going on in your community.
- 2) Actively engage your neighbors. Let them know when you will be out of town and when you are having work done on your house. This way your neighbor will be able to spot any suspicious “goings-on” or activity that is out of the ordinary. Likewise, take an active interest in your neighbors’ lives and daily activities. We all should know each other better and establishing neighborly relations makes each of us capable of spotting unusual activity when it occurs.
- 3) Establish a neighborhood directory so that you can quickly contact neighbors.
- 4) Neighborhood associations should consider setting up a street captain or phone tree means of communication of important information. Flyers handed out door-to-door have been an effective means of communication for many neighborhoods.
- 5) If you don’t have a home alarm system, consider purchasing one. Place the alarm sign prominently in your yard.
- 6) Turn your alarm system on anytime you leave your house, when you are in your home, and even when you are in your yard.
- 7) Keep your doors locked at all times, even when you are in your home or yard.
- 8) Pad lock or bolt gate, shed or garage access.
- 9) Install motion detectors or flood lights at all corners of your home. Keep your flood lights on all evening.
- 10) Never leave any valuables in your car. Keep your car doors locked.
- 11) If appropriate for your life-style, consider getting a dog.
- 12) Carry your cell phone with you when you walk in your neighborhood and when you are driving in your car so that you may promptly report suspicious activity. Do not hesitate to call 911 and ask that a patrol car in the area ride by when you see unusual or suspicious behavior. If the police are in the area, they are happy to drive by. You may also call a neighbor down the road so that they may be on the look out for the activity you spotted.
- 13) When you are running errands during the day or coming home at night after being out for the evening, take an extra drive around your neighborhood. Observe what is going on. If you are

out at lunch during the work day and can swing by your house, do so and then drive an extra lap or two around your neighborhood. Report any suspicious behavior to 911. You can also alert other neighbors in the area.

- 14) When you see strangers in your neighborhood, greet them directly, "Hello, good afternoon," "Hello, how are you," etc. Look them in the eye. Studies show that criminal activity is deterred when the potential culprits are addressed and acknowledged. It lets them know you are aware of their presence and that you have noted them and the time and place you encountered them. If the passer-by will not look you in the eye, it is reason to give the situation further attention, perhaps by alerting your neighbors of the stranger's presence.
- 15) If you see a vehicle circling through your neighborhood in a suspicious or unusual manner, note the make, model, and color of the vehicle, the license plate and the time and date you saw it. If the individual(s) are on bike or foot, note the type, style or color of the bike, as well as any clothing or physical descriptions. Write it down and keep it where you can find it. If you learn later that an incident occurred at that time and in that area, you can share the information with the police.
- 16) Make sure that you factually and objectively communicate information about events or incidents in your neighborhood. Seek reliable sources of information (from the police or your neighborhood association), before repeating it to others. Relay information you obtain in person so that any potential misunderstanding or misinterpretation can be remedied on the spot.
- 17) Email is an efficient way to communicate, but can sometimes lead to unintended misinformation going "viral." For the most effective neighborhood email communication, your neighborhood association should establish one person to be the "keeper" of the email list. That individual will be responsible for getting the most accurate report of any incident or concern. Those facts should be objectively reported in an email and proof read by at least one other officer or representative of the association to insure accuracy and absence of personal editorializing that may affect law enforcement efforts. The "keeper" of the list should address the email to his or her self or one other representative of the neighborhood association. All other emails should be in the "blind copied" (bcc) line of the email. This prevents the publication of personal email addresses to others and prevents the "reply all" effect of un-reviewed and unconfirmed information in any response to the email. Forward carefully, if at all. Before forwarding any e-mail, a sender should understand that there is no way to control inaccurate information from being added to the email once it has been forwarded.