

## Resources for Starting a Neighborhood Watch Group

*Ideas from the "Midvale Heights Neighborhood Watch" group*

### How do we get the word out that we exist?

This is the biggest challenge when starting a neighborhood watch (NW). Here are some ideas:

- If your neighborhood has an association that sends out a newsletter to all residents, ask if you can advertise your group in their newsletter
- Go door-to-door with flyers/postcards
- Advertise your group at a neighborhood picnic, sporting event or gathering
- Place notices on business/library/church bulletin boards
- Advertise your group on your neighborhood's Facebook or Nextdoor pages (if applicable)
- Ask your neighborhood association if they can schedule a talk by Police Chief Koval or your neighborhood/liaison MPD officer at one of their meetings and pass out information about your new neighborhood watch group at the meeting
- If you're in the midst of a crime spree, call one of the local TV stations and ask them to do a story about your new group

*Midvale Heights NW initially advertised in our association's newsletter as well as their Facebook page. We dropped postcards in some areas of the neighborhood and posted notices on bulletin boards. We continue to advertise regularly in our association's newsletter and on Nextdoor.*

### How should my group communicate?

Communication is vital for a neighborhood watch group. Here are some suggestions:

- **Use an email list:** An email list is the option with the most control. You'll need someone to monitor the names that get added to the email list. If your neighborhood has an established neighborhood association website you may be able to use the same web host for an email list, or even have your own separate webpage.
- **Start a Yahoo Group:** Several west side NW groups communicate via a Yahoo Group. Emails are generated when people post information. Some focus only on crime, others use the group as a community bulletin board in addition to reporting crime: <https://groups.yahoo.com/>
- **Connect on Nextdoor:** Nextdoor requires proof of address to join, so it's somewhat secure. It's a good place for posting meetings or sharing general information, but may not be the best for sharing specific crime information. No moderator is needed: <https://nextdoor.com/>
- **Use a closed Facebook Group:** This one is easy to set up, but has less privacy and control than the other options and you need a moderator(s).

*Midvale Heights NW uses an email list through our neighborhood association, and we also have our own webpage (through the association) where people can sign up to receive our crime alerts and weekly newsletter via email.*

## How can we make our neighborhood watch group a success?

Madison Police Crime Prevention Coordinator, Rodney Wilson, stresses that “a neighborhood watch is not sustainable if it’s just about reporting crime.” Groups tend to struggle or fizzle out entirely when crime drops. If you can offer periodic educational or community-building opportunities your group is much more likely to succeed. The relationship you build with the Madison Police Department is key. When residents are introduced to their MPD patrol/neighborhood officers and learn about crime prevention and how community policing works, they are much more likely to call 911 when they see something/someone suspicious in the neighborhood.

- **Invite a member of the Madison Police Department to speak at a gathering (association meeting or specific neighborhood watch meeting, etc.):** Police Chief Koval, MPD neighborhood/liaison officers, MPD’s K9 and Mounted Patrol Units and Crime Prevention Coordinator Rodney Wilson are just a few of the options. You can call your MPD district police station for help.
- **Invite other speakers on topics like crime prevention, the criminal justice system or personal safety:** Dane County Sheriff Dave Mahoney, DA Ismael Ozanne or Dane County 911 Operations Manager, Paul Logan, are all options.
- **Schedule tours:** Tours allow your neighbors to learn about community policing and the criminal justice system in Dane County first-hand, and neighbors get to know each other. Midvale Heights NW has taken tours of the 911 Dispatch Center, the West District Police Station, WKOW-TV, the Central District Police Station and the MPD’s training facility.

*Midvale Heights NW hosts a monthly meeting and has invited all of the above speakers and many others including an identity theft prevention expert from the Dept. of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Public Affairs Specialist from the FBI office in Milwaukee, a crime victim’s advocate from the WI Department of Justice, and Madison Fire Department Community Education Officer, Bernadette Galvez. Attendance ranges from 25 to 120 attendees depending on the speaker/topic. Steve would be happy to give you information about how to schedule any of these speakers.*

## Where can I get crime/personal safety information?

- To learn about specific crimes in your neighborhood visit the CrimeReports website: <https://www.crimereports.com/>
  - Click on the symbols to get details about specific crimes. If you click on “advanced search” and put a checkmark next to “proactive policing” you’ll also be able to see calls for suspicious people/vehicles made to the MPD from your neighborhood
- The MPD regularly reports a list of “incidents that have significant public interest” on their Incident Reports website: <http://www.cityofmadison.com/police/newsroom/incidentreports/>
- The MPD also has a blotter where they report crime statistics, make community announcements and offer personal safety tips: <http://www.cityofmadison.com/police/blog/>
- Chief Koval has his own blog: <http://www.cityofmadison.com/police/chief/blog/>

We invite you to attend any of our neighborhood watch meetings to see what we do. They occur on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Midvale Community Lutheran Church (at the corner of Tokay and Midvale Boulevards). You can contact Steve at [stevefitz@charter.net](mailto:stevefitz@charter.net) for more information.