



**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**CHAD CHRONISTER, SHERIFF**

## **Neighborhood Watch Introduction Booklet**

# **WARNING**



**Neighborhood Watch Program In Effect**

We Immediately Report All Suspicious Activity  
To The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office

**813-247-8200**

To Report Graffiti/Gang activity call  
**1-877-GANGOUT**



**Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office**

PO Box 3371, Tampa, Florida 33601

District I  
813-247-0600

District II  
813-247-8555

District III  
813-247-0330

District IV  
813-247-0455

District V  
813-318-5400

**[www.TeamHCSO.com](http://www.TeamHCSO.com)**



# **Table of Contents**

<b>A Message from Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister</b>	Page 1
<b>Introduction to Neighborhood Watch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is Neighborhood Watch?</li><li>• What Are the Benefits?</li></ul>	Page 2
<b>How Do I Start a Neighborhood Watch Program?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine a Geographical Watch Area</li><li>• Recruit and Organize Members</li><li>• Schedule a "Start-up" Meeting</li></ul>	Page 3
<b>Sign-up Sheets/Participation Agreements</b>	Pages 4-6
<b>Neighborhood Watch Coordinator Contact Form</b>	Page 7
<b>Neighborhood Watch Organizational Chart</b>	Page 8
<b>How Does Neighborhood Watch Work?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observe Suspicious Activity.</li><li>• Report Suspicious Activity &amp; Crimes In-Progress.</li><li>• Response by Law Enforcement.</li></ul>	Page 9
<b>How to Recognize Suspicious Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is Considered to be Suspicious?</li><li>• Suspicious Activities Include:</li></ul>	Page 10
<b>How to Report Suspicious Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tips for Reporting to Law Enforcement</li><li>• Tips for Obtaining Good Suspect Descriptions</li></ul>	Page 11
<b>Suspect &amp; Vehicle Description Sheet</b>	Page 12
<b>It is Important to Remember...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Neighborhood Watch is an "Eyes and Ears" Program!</li><li>• Communication Between Participants is Key</li><li>• Be Creative</li><li>• Florida State Statute and Neighborhood Watch</li></ul>	Page 13
<b>Other Programs Available from the Sheriff's Office</b>	Page 14



## Message From Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister



Dear Neighborhood Watch Participant,

Thank you for your interest in the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, and the safety of your community. The crime problem in our nation is both costly and demoralizing. Directly or indirectly, we are all affected by crime that has caused injury, financial loss and intimidation. These situations demonstrate the need for the community's involvement, and assistance in crime prevention, through the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Neighborhood Watch Program.

This community-based crime prevention program is a simple and direct approach toward protecting our community from criminal attacks. The program involves the reduction of criminal opportunity through citizen's participation in crime prevention measures, such as being alert and aware, reporting suspicious and criminal activity to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, and initiating actions which reduce criminal opportunity.

It is encouraging to find the concern and involvement you and your neighbors display with your Neighborhood Watch efforts. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office stands ready to assist and support you with this program.

Again, I welcome and appreciate your efforts toward making Hillsborough County a safer place to live and visit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chad Chronister".

Chad Chronister  
Sheriff



# Introduction to Neighborhood Watch

## What is Neighborhood Watch?

Neighborhood Watch is a volunteer citizen program of mutual assistance among neighbors aimed at reducing crime in the neighborhood at the grass roots level. It involves neighbors getting to know neighbors, being alert to the potential of crime, and being willing to look out for each other's interest. Neighborhood Watch is designed to ultimately involve thousands of residents throughout Hillsborough County because strong neighborhood involvement and neighborhood unity can deter crime. The only requirements for Neighborhood Watch are as follows:

- Participants must be alert, and willing to keep an eye on their neighborhood.
- Members must be willing to report suspicious activity to law enforcement.
- Participants must be willing to learn how they can make their homes more secure.
- Watch groups must meet at least once a year, or more often as needed.

Neighborhood Watch involves a cooperative effort between the citizens of Hillsborough County and law enforcement. Crime can occur any time and anywhere; Neighborhood Watch must be in effect 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Crime hurts everyone. Areas that have an active Neighborhood Watch Program have reported dramatic reductions in crime.



## What Are the Benefits?

The benefits of participating in an active Neighborhood Watch Program can be far reaching. Not only is it an effective deterrent in reducing crime, but it helps to create a better quality of life for its participants by providing a greater sense of security, responsibility, and personal control. If your home has been burglarized, Neighborhood Watch can help you recover peace of mind. Neighbors banding together and taking pride in their community helps to make their community safer and stronger by forming partnerships that address community concerns. In addition, Neighborhood Watch helps support local law enforcement. Residents participating in an active Neighborhood Watch Program, collectively, can add thousands of "eyes and ears" on the streets of Hillsborough County and to the available resources of the Sheriff's Office.



## **How Do I Start a Neighborhood Watch Program?**

### **Determine a Geographical Watch Area.**

Determine the exact geographical boundaries that your Neighborhood Watch program will cover. This is often easily accomplished by utilizing any pre-existing property lines, delineated within a residential subdivision, cluster or enclave. In the case of an apartment complex, mobile home park, condominium or townhome community, property lines may be designated by a surrounding barrier, such as landscaping, fencing, or a block wall. In urban areas, neighborhoods are designated by a grouping of streets or city blocks. By making use of any pre-existing property lines and/or other geographical boundaries, natural or otherwise, such as streets, parks, rivers, or lakes, your group should be able to clearly define its Watch Area.

### **Recruit and Organize Members.**

A Neighborhood Watch group is comprised of its participating membership. Members should include all interested and willing participants residing within a group's designated Watch Area. The first step is to recruit members. Please utilize the **Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Neighborhood Watch Sign-up Sheet & Participation Agreement** included in this booklet (pages 4-6), to obtain the information and signatures of as many interested residents in your neighborhood as possible, willing to participate in the program. The second step is to organize the group's membership: Coordinator(s), Block Captains, and Block Watchers. Then establish the group's leadership. Every Neighborhood Watch group should have, at a minimum, at least one Coordinator. Ideally, a group should have a Coordinator and an Assistant/Co-Coordinator, as well as several Block Captains. Organization will vary, depending on the number of participants within the community. Coordinator(s) and Block Captains are responsible for organizing meetings and relaying information to members. The bulk of any group's membership is comprised of Block Watchers, the individual residents participating in the program. Try to keep up to date contact information on all residents and make special efforts to involve everyone in the community.

### **Schedule a "Start-up" Meeting.**

Once a list of participants from the neighborhood has been collected, contact the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office—Community Resource Deputies to schedule your group's initial "start up" meeting with a law enforcement deputy. A deputy assigned to assist and support Neighborhood Watch programs within your designated patrol district will assist you in scheduling a date/time for the meeting. In order to maximize the deputy's availability, please try to schedule the meeting several weeks in advance. At the meeting, the deputy will explain how the program works and what the duties and responsibilities are for members participating in a Neighborhood Watch. It is recommended that a majority of the residents that signed-up on the Participation Agreement plan to attend the initial "start up" meeting.





Group Name/Title:

CONFIDENTIAL

Please note: The information provided in this agreement shall be retained by both the listed Neighborhood Watch group's designated Coordinator(s) and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office—Community Resource Deputy. The information is intended solely for use in contacting the above listed participants in matters pertaining to Neighborhood Watch or otherwise on the behalf of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. This information is not to be disclosed to any third party participants or other unauthorized persons and shall remain **CONFIDENTIAL**, under the provisions of F.S.S. 119.



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## Neighborhood Watch Coordinator Contact Form

Group Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Coordinator Contact Information:

Name (Last, First)	
Address	
City, State ZIP	
Phone	
Email	
Other Information	

### Assistant/Co-Coordinator #1 Contact Information: (If Applicable)

Name (Last, First)	
Address	
City, State ZIP	
Phone	
Email	
Other Information	

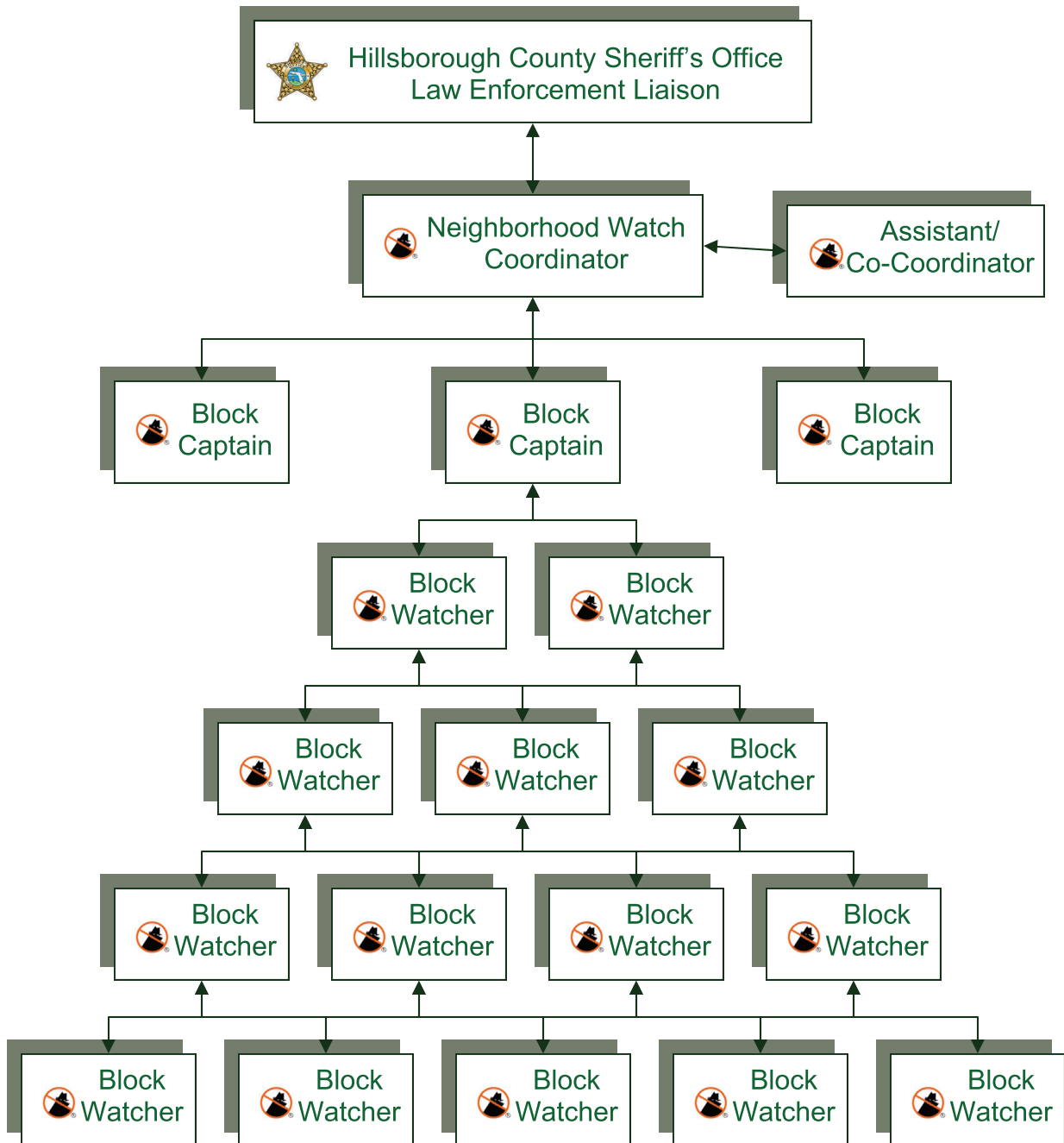
### Assistant/Co-Coordinator #2 Contact Information: (If Applicable)

Name (Last, First)	
Address	
City, State ZIP	
Phone	
Email	
Other Information	

Please note: The information provided in this agreement shall be retained by both the listed Neighborhood Watch group's designated Coordinator(s) and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office—Community Resource Deputy. The information is intended solely for use in contacting the above listed participants in matters pertaining to Neighborhood Watch or otherwise on the behalf of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. This information is not to be disclosed to any third party participants or other unauthorized persons and shall remain CONFIDENTIAL, under the provisions of F.S.S. 119.



## Neighborhood Watch Organizational Chart



It is the responsibility of each Neighborhood Watch participant to immediately report any and all suspicious persons, vehicles, or activity to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office non-emergency dispatch at (813) 247-8200. **In the event of an emergency or to report a crime-in-progress, please dial 911!**



## How Does Neighborhood Watch Work?

Neighborhood Watch works by a reduction of the criminal element. It is the responsibility of every Neighborhood Watch participant, upon observing any suspicious persons, vehicles, or activities in the neighborhood, to immediately report them to the Sheriff's Office. A law enforcement deputy will be dispatched to respond and investigate the matter further, but can only do so if you call it in and provide as much information as possible.

### **Observe Suspicious Activity.**

Most people take for granted the normal daily events in their lives. However, it is these normal day to day activities that help us better recognize suspicious behavior. What is considered suspicious behavior? Anything that might appear out of place, make you feel uncomfortable, or is otherwise out of the norm. This may include any unknown or suspicious persons, vehicles, or activities, any unauthorized or illegal activities, and any unusual or potentially dangerous incidents. Remember to pay specific attention to details: **who, what, when, where, how, and why?** Who is involved? What do they look like (gender, ethnicity, height, weight)?, When did the incident occur (date and time)? Where is the location of the incident (try to provide an address or closest intersection, if possible)? How many are there? Why is it suspicious to you?

### **Report Suspicious Activity & Crimes In-Progress.**

When you observe any suspicious persons, vehicles, or activities, you should immediately report them to the Sheriff's Office, via the non-emergency dispatch number, (813) 247-8200. **IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY OR A CRIME IN-PROGRESS, PLEASE DIAL 911!** Be sure to provide the call taker with your name, address, and telephone number. Advise them of the nature of your call and provide them with any other details that you may have obtained, if possible (i.e. the who, what, when, where, how, and why?). Be sure to advise them if the crime is in-progress or has already occurred. Are there any weapons involved? If observed, try to be specific when describing any suspects (i.e. race, sex, age, height, weight, eye/hair color, facial hair, tattoos, and articles of clothing worn.) When describing a vehicle, try to provide as much information as you can (i.e. year, make, model, style, accessories, markings, decals, dents or other damage.) Whenever possible, try to obtain the vehicle's tag number and if the vehicle leaves the scene, a direction of travel.

### **Response by Law Enforcement.**

Once the call taker has obtained all of the available information, a call for service will be entered into the dispatch system for a deputy to respond. If you are reporting a crime in-progress and have the suspicious person or vehicle in sight, you may be asked to remain on the line while a deputy is en route, provided you are able to do it safely. Upon arrival, the deputy responding may need to make contact with you in person, to obtain any further information required.



## How to Recognize Suspicious Activity

### What is Considered to be Suspicious?

Typically, suspicious activity and behavior occurs whenever a person's conduct or other circumstances appear to be out of the norm. Attention is often drawn to anything unusual, different, or out of place. Understandably, there are sometimes reasonable explanations for seemingly suspicious behavior. Don't let the uncertainty that something may be nothing hinder you from reporting suspicious activity when you believe it to be out of place. Trust your gut instincts!



### Suspicious Activities Include:

- A person running from a residence or vehicle for no apparent reason.
- A person screaming for help. If you cannot determine what is occurring, dial 911.
- A person looking into a neighbor's windows and/or parked cars, moving from door to door.
- A person with seemingly no purpose, wandering around or loitering in the neighborhood.
- A group of young people or adults gathering together to engage in a fight or otherwise apparent gang activity.
- Unusual sounds, such as breaking glass, door pounding, an audible alarm, or a gun shot.
- A vehicle idling slowly, without any lights on at night, or just circling the neighborhood with no apparent destination.
- Any unknown person(s) removing property from a neighbor's unoccupied home or a closed business.
- A stranger, on foot or in a vehicle, stopping to talk to a child on the street.
- A child resisting the advances of an adult.
- A person selling or exchanging merchandise, conducting business out of their vehicle.
- A stranger entering a neighbor's fenced yard or residence when unoccupied.
- Anyone sitting in a parked vehicle for an extended amount of time.
- Anyone removing accessories, license plates, or gasoline from a vehicle.
- A stranger removing appliances, electronics, carrying a garbage bag, pillow case, back-pack/satchel or other bundle, from a neighbor's home.



## How to Report Suspicious Activity


Law enforcement officers need to obtain accurate information, as quickly as possible, about suspicious activity or a crime in-progress. Here are a few tips to guide you when reporting.

### Tips for Reporting to Law Enforcement:

- Immediately report any/all suspicious persons, vehicles, and activity to the Sheriff's Office non-emergency dispatch at (813) 247-8200.
- In case of emergency or crime(s) in-progress, dial 911!
- Give your name, address and telephone number.
- Describe the incident in a brief manner: who, what, when, where, how, and why?
- Report if the crime is in-progress or already occurred.
- Are there any weapons involved?
- Be specific when describing any suspects (race, sex, age, height, weight, eye/hair color, facial hair, tattoos and articles of clothing worn.)
- Describe any vehicles involved (year, make, model, style, accessories, markings, decals, and any damages). If possible, provide a tag number and the last known direction of travel.

### Tips for Obtaining Good Suspect Descriptions:

- Race (White, Black, Hispanic, Etc.)
- Sex (Male/Female)
- Age (Approximate)
- Height
- Weight
- Eye Color
- Eye Glasses? (Yes/No, Style?)
- Hair (Color/Length)
- Facial Hair? (Beard, Moustache)
- Complexion (Fair, Dark, Tan, Etc.)
- Scars/Marks
- Tattoos
- Clothing (Hat, Shirt, Pants, Etc.)
- Mask or Gloves? (Yes/No, Style?)
- Accent? (Did They Say Anything?)
- Weapons? (Gun, Knife, Bat, Etc.)
- Vehicle (Color, Make, Model, Etc.)
- Body Style (2 Door, 4 Door, SUV)
- Tag Number (Is it a Florida tag?)
- Direction of Travel (N, E, S, W?)



### Suspect & Vehicle Description Sheet

Immediately report any/all suspicious persons, vehicles, or activity to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office non-emergency dispatch at (813) 247-8200.  
(In the event of an emergency or a crime in-progress, dial 911!)

**General Appearance**

Race: ☐ White ☐ Black ☐ Other

Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Eyes: (Color, shape, size; eye glasses, sun glasses, style/color of frames, or other.)

Hair: (Color, length, style: wig, hat, baseball cap, ski mask, stocking, hood, or other.)

Face: (Nose, mouth, teeth, lips, ears, mustache, beard, goatee, sideburns, moles, complexion, or other.)

Voice: (Language, accent, lip, stutter, loud, soft, or other speech characteristics.)

Scars/Tattoos: (Shape, size, style, color; any names, numbers, emblems, or other artwork.)

Weapon: (Gun: revolver, semi-automatic, rifle, shotgun; knife: ball, club, or other object; left or right-hand.)

Pants: (Jeans, khakis, slacks, shorts, skirt; belt, buckle, any logos, brands, patches, color, stripes, print, other.)

Shoes: (Sneakers, dress, boots, flats, heels, sandals; laces, socks, barefoot; any logos, brands, color, stripes, other.)

Direction of travel: (North, South, East, West; rolled the front, rear, or side door; on foot, in a vehicle, other.)

Shirt: (T-shirt, tank top, polo, dress, long or short-sleeved, coat, tie, jacket, vest, sweater, hooded; any logos, brands, or patches, color, stripes, print, or other.)

Accessories: (Backpack, book bag, knapsack, garbage bag, flashlight, screwdriver, crowbar; any rings, chains, watches, or other jewelry; left or right hand.)

**Facial Appearance**

Skin/Hair Color

Eyebrow Shape & Color

Eye Shape & Color

Size & Shape of Nose

Shape of Mouth & Lips

Chin Clefts

Hair Style & Texture

Complexion, Scars, or Marks

Cheeks (Full or Sunk)

Size & Shape of Ear

Mustache or Beard

Neck & Adam's Apple

**Vehicle Description**

2 Door Convertible Color: \_\_\_\_\_

4 Door Sedan Make: \_\_\_\_\_

Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Body Style: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Sport Utility Vehicle License Plate #: \_\_\_\_\_

Window Tint: \_\_\_\_\_

Pick-up Truck Rims/Tires: \_\_\_\_\_

Head/Tail Lights Shape: \_\_\_\_\_





Dents/Damages: \_\_\_\_\_

# Occupants: \_\_\_\_\_

Direction of Travel: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Try to be as descriptive as possible.)

**Weapon Types**

Knife  Revolver  Semi-Automatic  Pump Shotgun  Rifle 

For further information, contact the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office—Community Outreach Division  
Post Office Box 3371 Tampa, Florida 33601 (813) 247-8115 www.hcso.tampa.fl.us

Revised 1/12





# Suspect & Vehicle Description Sheet

Immediately report any/all suspicious persons, vehicles, or activity to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office non-emergency dispatch at (813) 247-8200.  
(In the event of an emergency or a crime in-progress, dial 911!)

## General Appearance

Race: ☐ White    Sex: ☐ Male    Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Black    ☐ Female    Height: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Other    Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

**Eyes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Color, shape, size; eye glasses, sun glasses, style/color of frames, or other.)

**Hair:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Color, length, style; wig, hat, baseball cap, ski mask, stocking, hood, or other.)

**Face:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Nose, mouth, teeth, lips, ears; mustache, beard, goatee, sideburns; moles, complexion, or other.)

**Voice:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Language, accent, lisp, stutter; loud, soft, or other speech characteristics.)

### Scars/Tattoos:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Shape, size, style, color; any names, numbers, emblems, or other artwork.)

**Shirt:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(T-shirt, tank top, polo, dress; long or short sleeve; coat, tie, jacket, vest, sweater, hooded; any logos, brands, or patches; color, stripes, print, or other.)

### Weapon:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Gun: revolver, semi-automatic, rifle, shotgun; knife; bat, club, or other object; left or right-hand.)

### Pants:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Jeans, khakis, slacks, shorts, skirt; belt, buckle, any logos, brands, patches; color, stripes, print, other.)

### Accessories:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Backpack, book bag, knapsack, garbage bag, flashlight, screwdriver, crowbar; any rings, chains, watches, or other jewelry; left or right hand.)

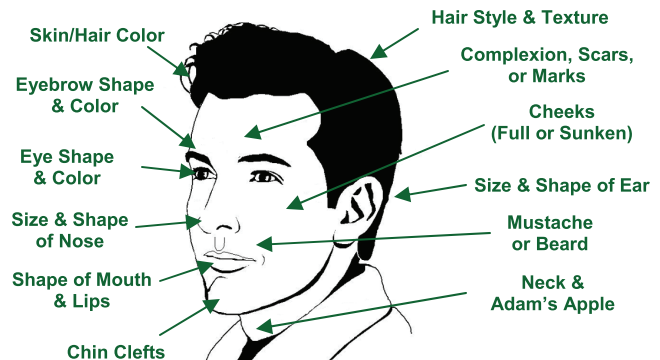
### Shoes:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Sneakers, dress, boots, flats, heels, sandals; laces, socks, barefoot; any logos, brands; color, stripes, other.)

### Direction of travel:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(North, South, East, West; exited the front, rear, or side door; on foot, in a vehicle, other.)

## Facial Appearance



## Vehicle Description

### 2 Door Convertible



Color: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4 Door Sedan



Make: \_\_\_\_\_

Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Body Style: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

### Sport Utility Vehicle



License Plate #: \_\_\_\_\_

Window Tint: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pick-up Truck



Rims/Tires: \_\_\_\_\_

Head/Tail Lights Shape: \_\_\_\_\_

Dents/Damages: \_\_\_\_\_

### Van/Minivan



# Occupants: \_\_\_\_\_

Direction of Travel: \_\_\_\_\_

### Motorcycle



Other: \_\_\_\_\_

(Try to be as descriptive as possible.)

## Weapon Types



Knife



Revolver



Semi-Automatic



Pump Shotgun



Rifle



## **It is Important to Remember...**

### **Neighborhood Watch is an “Eyes and Ears” Program!**

Neighborhood Watch is not a vigilante group. Participants, as private citizens, are only to report their observations of suspicious activity to law enforcement; not to take action themselves. The confrontation, apprehension, and/or detention of any suspicious persons observed by participants should be handled by a trained law enforcement officer, empowered to perform law enforcement duties, as outlined under Florida law.

### **Communication Between Participants is Key.**

In order for a Neighborhood Watch group to be effective, open lines of communication between all participants should be readily available. Once established, your group should set up a primary method of contact to foster better communication between neighbors. Participants keep one another informed of any suspicious or criminal activity occurring in the neighborhood and receive information pertinent to their Neighborhood Watch group. Phone chains can be an effective way for neighbors to share information (particularly during an emergency where immediate notification is crucial, such as when a child is reported missing), but nowadays email is one of the easiest ways for people to communicate with each other at anytime. Texting and the use a social networking website (such as Facebook, Twitter, or Google+) can also be extremely useful. However, please keep in mind that not everyone in a Watch group may have all of these methods at their disposal.

### **Be Creative.**

One of the biggest challenges is keeping people involved. Find creative ways to keep the group engaged that benefit the entire neighborhood. Ideas include: develop a newsletter; organize a clean-up, fundraiser, or training presentation; plan a social event, pot-luck, or barbeque.

### **Florida State Statute with Regard to Neighborhood Watch.**

Be aware that laws are in place to help protect citizens participating in a Neighborhood Watch.

**843.20 Harassment of participant of neighborhood crime watch program prohibited; penalty; definitions.--**

(1) It shall be a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. [775.082](#) or s. [775.083](#), for any person to willfully harass, threaten, or intimidate an identifiable member of a neighborhood crime watch program while such member is engaged in, or traveling to or from, an organized neighborhood crime watch program activity or a member who is participating in an ongoing criminal investigation, as designated by a law enforcement officer.

(2) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Harass" means to engage in a course of conduct directed at a specific person which causes substantial emotional distress in that person and serves no legitimate purpose.

(b) "Organized neighborhood crime watch program activity" means any prearranged event, meeting, or other scheduled activity, or neighborhood patrol, conducted by or at the direction of a neighborhood crime watch program or the program's authorized designee.



## **Other Programs Available from the Sheriff's Office**

**The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office  
recommends utilizing the following programs offered  
in conjunction with a Neighborhood Watch Program**

### **Operation Identification (Operation ID).**

Operation ID is a program where property is marked or engraved with a unique owner applied number (OAN) to assist in identifying and recovering the property, should it ever be stolen. The use of Operation ID has shown significant results. Burglars and thieves typically avoid such visibly marked items because they are easily identifiable and therefore hard to sell. It is a good idea to take an inventory of all electronics, appliances, and other valuables and make a list to include: item, brand, model, serial number, description, and approximate value. Be sure to keep this list in a secure location.

### **Residential Security Surveys.**

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office offers free Residential Security Surveys to homeowners for residences located in unincorporated Hillsborough County. A trained law enforcement deputy will assess your home and provide target hardening recommendations based on fundamental crime prevention and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles. Areas discussed may include, but are not limited to: doors, windows, locks, lighting, landscaping, garages, and alarm system.



**For further information, contact the  
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office  
Post Office Box 3371  
Tampa, Florida 33601**

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