



## Home Safety & Security Tips Vers2021

**National Night Out**, an annual, nationwide Neighborhood Watch campaign. The event takes place on the first Tuesday of October in cities across Texas. The program promotes involvement in local crime and drug prevention activities, strengthens police-community partnerships and encourages neighborhood camaraderie as part of our national efforts to let criminals know that America is united and dedicated to building a safer, more caring country.

**Lock Your Doors – Turn on Your Front Porch Light – Go Outside and Meet Your Neighbors!**

### ➤ **What is Neighborhood Watch?**

Neighborhood Watch programs begin with you. Officers count on your support in their efforts to fight crime. This is a never ending task that cannot be undertaken by the Police department alone. Thank you for taking the time to educate yourself on how to better protect your neighborhood, family and home. Neighborhood Watches are designed to supplement police patrols by residents becoming the eyes and ears of their department.

**The three main principles of Neighborhood Watch are as follows:**

- 1. Getting to know your neighbors and watching out for them.**
- 2. Watching out for your neighbors' property.**
- 3. Reporting suspicious or illegal activity to police immediately.**

Members are simply asked to use common sense, and observe what is going on around them; recognize their neighborhood's individual identity, what is normal activity, who "belongs" there, etc.

The added benefits are that members have a sense of community, pride and peace of mind.

### ➤ **Facts about Crime:**

Burglaries, auto thefts, rape, child abductions and arson are the most prevalent crimes nationwide.

Home burglaries are one of the easiest crimes to commit and prevent, but one of the hardest crime to solve.

Statistics show that in more than half of home burglaries, forced entry is NOT involved!

The majority of home burglaries occur during daylight hours.

## ➤ **Residents**

- Attend the program meetings and read the newsletter.
- Secure your home and personal property. Follow the recommendations from the security survey and participate in Operation ID
- Be alert to suspicious activity and report it immediately.
- Have your newspapers stopped and mail picked up when away.
- Inform your neighbors and block captains if you plan to be away so that special attention can be given to your home.
- Neighborhood Watch is a proven crime reduction program. But, like any self-help activity, its success depends upon you and your neighbor.

## ➤ **Learn How to Protect Yourself**

- More than 6.8 million residential burglaries are committed annually, one every five seconds. Don't become a victim.
- Secure all swinging doors with dead-bolt locks. Use an auxiliary locking bar, to secure sliding doors.
- Keep doors locked whether you are at home or away.
- Close and lock windows when you leave your home.
- Don't hide spare keys. Burglars always seem to find them. Instead, give your keys to a trusted neighbor.
- When going on vacation stop all deliveries and ask a neighbor to stop by your house once a day to pick up advertising circulars or anything else that may pile up at your front step.
- Use automatic timers to turn indoor lights on and off to make it appear you are at home.
- Identify your belongings. By engraving an identifying number on your possessions you can reduce the chances that your possessions will be stolen. If they are stolen, the identifying numbers will make it easier for the item to be returned to you if it's recovered by the police.

## ➤ **When to Call the Police**

The purpose for reporting suspicious activity to the police is to stop the criminal activity that may be occurring, increase police presence in your neighborhood and give a true perspective of crime in the area. Making a report helps police establish criminal patterns and increases the potential for the return of your property.

**If the situation is an Emergency or if you are not sure go ahead and call 911. Never worry about "bothering" the police. Your police department is there for you. Use your cell phone so your security system (if armed) can use the land line to call dispatch. Call the IPD 911 first... call Las Colinas Security second!**

**Keep the Non-Emergency police phone number handy: 972.273.1010. This is a 24-hour line.** Police officers check on suspicious circumstances and persons every day. If your suspicions prove to be unfounded, do not be embarrassed. You might help stop a potential crime, save a life or prevent an injury. Think about what could happen if you fail to act.

Whether calling 911 to report an emergency or the non-emergency number, remember to stay calm. The operator will ask about the problem. Give a specific and brief answer (i.e. a man is breaking into a car or there is a fire at my neighbor's house).

Next, answer the operator's questions. Help is on the way as you speak. The operator is trained to get information from you in the order it needs to be sent to the officer. You will need to provide a location and a description of what is occurring or who is involved. Again, be as specific as possible (but brief). Do not hang up until the operator tells you to hang up!

**Do not attempt to apprehend a person who is committing a crime. Do not attempt to investigate suspicious activity.** Your personal safety may be at risk if you intervene. The police need your information - not your action. When the police arrive, do not immediately rush onto the scene. Stay in a safe place and tell the operator where the officer can find **YOU**.

### ➤ Suspicious Activities

<u>Circumstance</u>	<u>Possible Crime</u>
• Door-to door sales person is seen going - To rear of a home or apartment - <b>Do Not Open Door! Ask for COI ID card!</b>	burglary or theft
• Waiting /loitering in front of home or closed business	burglary or theft
• Forcing entry into home, business or car	burglary or theft
• Person running, especially if something of value is carried	suspect fleeing scene
• Large amount of human traffic to/from a residence on a regular basis - drug, vice or fence operation	
• Person screaming	rape or assault in progress
• Person looking into parked cars especially if carrying a light	car thief, car burglar
• Person loitering around school, parks, secluded area, parking lot-sex offender, pedophile	
• Person offering items for sale in a parking lot, road-side	selling stolen items
• Person repeatedly driving through area	burglary, theft suspect
• "Delivery man" with "wrong address" or Asked if another person lives at location - <b>Do Not open Door! Ask for COI ID card!</b>	burglary, theft or scam artist
• Car being driven slowly or with lights off	casing area; eluding police
• Parked car with occupants (especially at an unusual hour)	look-outs or casing area
• Cars being loaded with valuables	burglary or theft
• Moving van or other vehicle being loaded at a neighbor's home (Especially if you haven't heard that the neighbor was moving)	burglary or theft
• Abandoned car on your block	stolen car, dumped junk car
• Someone being forced into a car,	kidnapping, assault or rape Especially female or juvenile
• Persons taking pieces off of a car or cutting up a car	theft or vandalism
• Objects thrown from a car	disposal drugs, weapons /contraband
• Continuous repair operations at a non-business location	chop shop for stolen vehicles
• Open or broken doors/window at any location	burglary, theft or vandalism
• Unusual odor (paint thinner)	drug lab

- Person exhibiting unusual mental or physical symptoms                      injured, intoxicated or mental illness
- Large accumulations of the same type of items                                      stolen property (car stereos, computers, etc.) inside a garage, home, storage area, etc.

There are thousands of unusual or suspicious circumstances that can occur at any time. Remember, the police officers cannot be every place at the same time. Alerting police about situations such as these or others can lead to the reduction of crime in your area.

➤ **Learn To Be Observant**

The most valuable help you can give an officer is information to identify suspects or suspect vehicles. That and facts about the crime or suspicious circumstances are the two main components of an investigation. Keep a notepad handy in case you need to write down the facts.

Here are some important details to focus on:

<u>Person</u> -	Sex	Race	Age	Height
	Weight	Hair	Eyes/Glasses	Hat
	Shirt	Pants	Coat	Shoes
	Tattoos/Scars	Jewelry	Complexion	Facial Hair
 <u>Vehicle</u> –	License plate	Color	Number of Doors	Year
	Make/Model (Chevy, Ford etc)		Body Damage	Custom fixtures
	Stickers	Direction of travel		Number of people in car

If this seems like too much information to digest, don't worry. If you make it a habit to be aware of people and cars around every day, observation will become second nature.

➤ **How do YOU know...? When Should I Call the Police?**

Use common sense! Not every person who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal. There are some basic rules of safety and common sense that come into play.

1. Be alert. Know what is going on around you.
2. Be aware. Consider the circumstances. For instance, is he going door-to-door putting fliers on doors and walking off? Or might the criminal be the person taking his time knocking on the door (while nervously glancing around), and looking into windows as he goes house- to – house? Who would you call the police on?
3. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. We've all had that feeling. Too many times though, officers have taken crime reports from people who ignored that "funny" feeling that something was not right. If you are that suspicious, go ahead and call the police.



## ➤ VACATION CHECK LIST...

### DO:

- Lock all doors, including the garage door and overhead doors.
- Lock all windows, including basement and garage windows.
- Cancel all deliveries (newspapers, mail, bottled water, etc.) or have mail and newspapers picked up by a family member/neighbor.
- Have family/neighbor pick up and handbills/trash.
- Arrange to have the lawn mowed.
- Adjust blind or draperies.
- Place at least two interior light on timers in separate rooms.
- Secure all exterior valuables (ladders, mowers, etc.)
- Secure items such as jewelry, furs, cameras, credit cards and checks and checking account statements.
- Arrange to have friend/family house sit while you are away.
- Have a neighbor park in your driveway and report suspicious activity to the police.
- Make sure a friend/family member has your travel plan and emergency contact information.
- Leave a radio on near the doorway (tune in to a talk station).
- Turn down or turn on the ringer on your house phone.
- Make sure someone will take care of your pets.
- **Put your house on the Police Vacation Watch list – see IPD web site!**

### DON'T:

- Leave notes outside indicating your absence.
- Hide keys under mats, in lights, flower pots, fake rocks, etc.
- Leave a message on your answering machine that says you are not there!
- Do not leave an Auto reply on emails originating from your home computer, it often shows the dates during which you will be away.

## ➤ **MISCELLANEOUS SECURITY INFORMATION**

**Alarms offer extra security, but they are no substitute for good locks and other hardware.**

Keep in mind that alarms do not keep people out of your home. Although they can be a good deterrent to burglars, alarms are designed to notify an alarm company first. Then, the company notifies the police. An alarm with an audible, exterior siren or bell will add additional security, as this will alert anyone in the neighborhood when it sounds.

**Alarm Monitoring Signs** should be prominently displayed at all entry points and decals on windows. For additional information on alarm systems, see the last page of this booklet located on IPD Website.

**The City of Irving requires that you have an alarm permit** – call 972.721.2411 for information.

**Test your Alarm System** with LCA or other service providers **monthly** or if you have a power outage. Verify that the backup battery and system are well maintained.

## ➤ **ARM AND USE YOUR SECURITY SYSTEM!**

**Where are your spare keys?** Rekey locks if you have recently purchased or suspect that you have missing or lost keys!

**What about your garage door opener?** Is it in your unlocked car that is sitting in your drive (or worse yet on the street)? Did you leave one in a car you sent for repairs?

**Walk through the garage.** The door from the garage to the house should meet the standards for doors and locks previously discussed. What about the actual garage door? Is it in good condition? Is it metal or wooden? Does it have windows? Is there an electric remote controlled garage door opener? If so, does the cord release to the opener hang in front of the windows on the door? Is there a sliding bolt on the door that goes through the rail?

**Most garage doors are difficult to secure due to their construction.** Here are a few ideas: Remove any knobs or rings from tan automatic garage door release cord. If they are left in place, an intruder can break out the window to pull it or use a coat hanger slipped through the top of the door (or a crevice) and pull the cord. Then the door will be released from the locking track. (Note: by removing the knob or ring from the cord it may not be as easily pulled by you if there is an emergency so have an alternate release plan ready).

Keep the garage door closed and locked at all times. Cover the windows to keep thieves from peering inside. Another option is to place mirrored film over the windows. You do not want a burglar to know when you are at home or gone.

While on vacation, place a padlock through the track or at the end of the door bolt. Unplug the automatic door opener as well. It's easy for a burglar to drive along the street with a "code-grabber" and simply open your garage door with the touch of a button!

If you need to replace your garage door consider buying a window-less, metal door. They offer the most security and can prevent potential risk hazard of falling glass during operation if the door malfunctions. While standing in your garage, look up. Do you have attic access? Do you have pull-down stairs? This needs to be secured also. A case hardened, hinging clasp with a good padlock will help secure this.

**HOME SECURITY POINTS:** Visit the IPD web site for a 30 item check list. This checklist was designed to identify features in your home or in the daily routines of your family that might make you an easy target for burglars. Your goal is to eliminate any opportunity that invites criminals to your home. The security inspection should begin at your front door, and include an inspection of all doors, windows, locks, lights and landscaping. After completing the survey, you will have an idea of which areas to tackle to improve your security.

**City of Irving Police Department Contacts: Police Crime Prevention Unit - 972.721.7778**

City of Irving.org >Police >Programs >Neighborhood Watch >Starting a new Program

>Neighborhood Watch Program Booklet (pdf file)

[http://issuu.com/cityofirving/docs/neighwatch\\_neighwatchpgm-1?e=11107043/8648342](http://issuu.com/cityofirving/docs/neighwatch_neighwatchpgm-1?e=11107043/8648342)