

Frequently Asked Questions



What is Block Watch?

Block Watch is a community driven program which brings neighbors together through increased communication between themselves and the police. Block Watches have two significant commitments. One, to be concerned about your neighbor's property as you would your own and two, report suspicious activity to the police and your neighbors in a timely manner.

What are the benefits of having a Block Watch in my neighborhood?

When your Block Watch is up and running and signs are installed, crime rates drop significantly. Statically, crime drops on average, 50 percent when your Block is active and operating. Also, depending who your home insurance provider is, you may be eligible for a reduction up to a maximum of 15 percent. This reduction applies regardless of whether you are a Block Captain or Participant. Block Watches create a sense of community because you begin to know your neighbors as real people, just not the person who lives down the road or the guy that walks his dog late at night.

What does it cost?

The Block Watch Society of BC produces the signs and each sign costs \$30. It is the responsibility of the Block Watch participants to pay for each sign required for their area. The City of Port Alberni covers the installation cost of each sign on City property. If the Block Watch is a Strata or on private property, the cost for the installation is the responsibility of the Strata or owners of the private property.

Who can start up a Block Watch?

Like any group, there needs to be a leader, someone willing to step up and take the initiative to see an idea through to fruition. In a Block Watch, they are called Block Watch Captains. It's no fun working alone and to keep a project moving forward there should be others involved. We call them Co-Captains. If the Captain goes on vacation or takes sick or moves, the Co-Captain can take over.

Block Captains and Co-Captains need to complete a police information check. This check is provided free of charge by the City of Port Alberni and can be obtained from the staff at the front counter of the Port Alberni RCMP Detachment. The front counter is open Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday. Applicants will also be required to produce two pieces of approved government issued ID (i.e. BC DL, BC ID, passport).

How much time does it take to set up a Block Watch?

It usually takes between 3-4 hours. After completing your criminal record check, you and your Co-Captain will meet with the Block Watch coordinator to go over program details, expectations and responsibilities, etc. You will then be provided with participant list forms and a Block Watch volunteer ID tag identifying you as a Block Watch Captain or Co-Captain. Complete the participant list forms by going door to door to obtain contact information from your neighbors who are interested in participating in the Block Watch. This can be the time consuming but most Captains and Co-Captains say it's worthwhile and fun as it is the first step in getting to know their neighbors and bringing your community together! Do we need to hold regular meetings after we are set up and do they have to be at my house?

To maintain an active Block Watch status, Captains and Co-Captains must hold at least one meeting per year. The meeting can be at your or your neighbor's house or backyard or at a local community hall or school. The frequency of these meetings is entirely up to you. Some Blocks like to hold meetings in the summer and plan a neighborhood BBQ around it. Others have even held Block Parties (contact the City of Nanaimo for details).

If I'm the Block Captain, does it make me responsible for the safety of my neighbors homes?

No, the safety of your home and that of your neighbors is every one's responsibility! The Block Watch Coordinator will send out regular alerts and media releases via email to each Captain. It is the Captain's responsibility to disseminate these to the participants in their Block Watch. This information will not always pertain to your specific neighborhood and may concern other areas of Nanaimo. Remember, crime is fluid and at any time crime it can knocking in your neighborhood, so it is important to stay informed. At the initial Block Watch introduction presentation, the program coordinator will review when it is appropriate to call 911 vs the non-emergency number (250-723-2424) to contact the police of an incident.

When I go door to door, what happens and what if I get bombarded with questions that I can't answer?

No worries, when going door to door, you're simply asking your neighbors if they're interested in starting a Block Watch. You will have your Block Watch Captain or Co-Captain ID tag and you will have brochures to leave with them. If you are asked any questions that you do not have the answer to, simply let them know you will contact the Block Watch coordinator and get the answer for them. When going door to door, you will have your participant sheet with you and will be asking people if they wish to join the Block. Residents will be asked to provide their name, address, phone number and email address. It is entirely voluntary and the contact information gathered will remain confidential. Once everyone is signed up, Captains should then create an email distribution list with all participant's emails in order to disseminate future information to them.

What do I do with the information I gather?

The Captain keeps a copy of the participant lists and a copy will be provided to the Block Watch Coordinator. It is a good idea for Captains to create a generic email address in order to disseminate information to participants. An example would be anystreetblockwatch@gmail.com. You may also consider communicating via a closed facebook group. This is a more interactive means of engagement. Clear communication guidelines should be indicated from the onset in order to keep comments respectful and on point with the Block Watch program.

There are several "problem houses" in our area; do I need to include them?

No you don't. Also, renters are more than welcome especially if they are long term.

How big does my Block Watch have to be?

It really depends on the size of your "community" and how much interaction there exists with your neighbors.

I live on strata property. Can I have a Block Watch?

There are several active Block Watches which are on strata properties. The only difference is that you are responsible for the installation and cost associated with putting signs up.

I live in an apartment building. Can I start a Block Watch?

Block Watches work, not only in residential areas but for condos, mobile trailer parks and apartment buildings.

If one of the homes in our Block Watch is broken into, should they call the Block Captain first?

No, they should call the Port Alberni RCMP first. Only after the situation has been dealt with by the police should you advise your Block Captain.

I see “Neighborhood Watch” signs up on my street. Does that mean there is a Block Watch program already in place?

Neighborhood Watch has not existed for many years and was replaced by Block Watch. If a Block Watch is created in an area where a “Neighborhood Watch” sign exists, the Block Watch sign will simply replace the existing sign to avoid any confusion.

How do I get started?

If you want to get started or find out more about Block Watch, contact the Port Alberni RCMP Community Policing Section at 250-724-8962. You can also visit the provincial Block Watch website at www.blockwatch.com