

Neighborhood Watch Joint Meeting Questions & Answers

October 19, 2016

Q: What is considered the optimal number of homes in a neighborhood watch?

A: There is no size requirement for a Neighborhood Watch group. It really depends on what is manageable for you and your neighbors. Many neighborhoods find that a group of about 10-12 homes is a good place to start and can be easily maintained.

Q: What if I do not get a response from 911?

A: The 911 call center is staffed around the clock and it is unlikely that you will get no response when you call, except in the event of City or region emergency. However, if this happens call again and ask for a supervisor

Q: What is the Non-Emergency number?

A: 408-299-2311

Q: Do you want what appears to be Contractor Vehicles reported?

A: If you see something that feels off or suspicious, always call it in. It's better to call in than not.

Q: Can we get a soft copy of the presentation?

A: Yes, it will be on the City's website at www.saratoga.ca.us/stayingsafe and will be emailed to everyone on the sign-up sheet.

Q: How does crime in Saratoga compare with neighboring cities like Monte Sereno, Los Gatos, Cupertino, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills?

A: Here are a few sources for city crime rates:

Neighborhood Scout - <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/>

FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics - <http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/Crime.cfm>

Crime Reports - <https://www.crimereports.com/>

While Saratoga is one of the safest cities in the state, ranking cities can be misleading given the numerous factors that affect the volume and type of crime occurring from city to city. The FBI has an excellent publication on the use of crime statistics - [Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics: Their Proper Use](#).

Q: Should we discourage resident from taking photos of strangers or vehicles to get their license plates, etc?

A: Only if you take a picture from inside the house. Don't put yourself in danger or create a potential conflict.

Q: Can we have signs installed at the main entrance of our area even if that street has no watch group...yet?

A: Neighborhood Watch can be very simple to implement. If you don't have a Neighborhood Watch yet, visit www.saratoga.ca.us/stayingsafe for additional information or contact the City for assistance in forming one. You can contact Crystal Bothelio in the City Manager's Office at 408.868.1269 or cbothelio@saratoga.ca.us.

Q: Is there a growing risk for more armed burglars if all residents increase their security measures with surveillance cameras and alarms, etc?

A: Burglars want to steal property and are not interested in confronting residents. Surveillance cameras and alarms will certainly deter burglars. The Sheriff's Office has not seen an increase in armed burglars as a result of increased security measures put in place by residents.

Q: What cities does the Sheriff's Office take care of?

A: The West Valley Division of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office serves the cities of Saratoga, Cupertino, Los Altos Hills, and unincorporated areas of the County.

Q: What information does the City need for Neighborhood Watch?

A: The boundary area of your neighborhood and contact information for at least one person acting as the lead or coordinator for your neighborhood. You can register online at www.saratoga.ca.us/stayingsafe

Q: What surveillance camera position works best for my home?

A: Have the Sheriff come out and help determine the best camera position.

Q: What is the response time after an alarm call?

A: Five to six minutes after the alarm goes off.

Q: How many property crimes are solved?

A: We know that a small number of criminals commit a large number of the property crimes. At times 2 or 3 burglars will begin burglarizing houses or vehicles and will keep doing it until they're caught; so they can commit 30 or 40 burglaries before they get caught, and they're almost always caught at some point. Once caught, the Sheriff's Office, or other law enforcement agencies, will attempt to determine how many theft related crimes the person(s) may be responsible for in our region.

Q: Are you going to get rid of graffiti on Big Basin Way?

A: The graffiti was removed. If you want to report graffiti, please call Public Works at 408-868-1245.

Q: Does a garage door opener open any door other than my own?

A: No

Q: My wife wants to buy a gun. I think that an intruder can take it away from you and use it against you. What's your opinion on gun ownership?

A: While guns are used for personal security, it's really a personal decision. Safety training courses are locally available and encouraged if you own a firearm. Make sure firearms at home are secure and cannot be accessed by children.

Q: How do you stop the Saratoga News Delivery?

A: The *Saratoga News* is delivered to residents as part of their *San Jose Mercury News* subscription for the Friday paper. If you no longer wish to receive the *Saratoga News*, you can modify your *San Jose Mercury News* subscription.

Q: Three of my friends had their houses burglarized. The alarm was removed off the wall in less than 40-60 seconds – before the alarm could go off- and was disabled. How do we address this problem?

A: Contact the alarm company and ask them for a security assessment describing your concerns. Several companies offer different types of upgrades as well as video surveillance systems that are motion activated. The motion activated systems will record anyone approaching a residence.

Q: Can we get neighborhood cameras at key entry points in Saratoga?

A: Residents may install security cameras on their property facing key entry points to their neighborhood if they wish.

Q: What is Saratoga doing to implement video cameras and license plate readers at City entrance/exits to supplement private residence cameras?

A: Currently, there are no plans to install public security cameras or license plate readers. However, residents may position personal security cameras on their property facing the street and/or neighborhood entryways.

Q: We seem to have several Neighborhood Watch Groups. Is it good to be in several groups?

A: The real value of Neighborhood Watch is to know the people in your neighborhood. If you know your neighbors, you probably have a better sense for typical behaviors and activities, such as the vehicles that pass down your street, landscaper schedules, etc. This means that you are better equipped to spot and report suspicious or unusual activity, which may result in stopping crimes or catching criminals. If you choose to be part of multiple Neighborhood Watch groups, there is certainly no harm. It probably means that you have an even broader network and sensitivity to norms within your community.

Q: How effective is the coating you put on glass sliding door that makes the glass hard to break? Is it a good idea?

A: If burglars are determined to enter a home, they will find a way to do so. However, making it difficult for burglars may be good as it will increase the likelihood that they will bring attention to themselves. Breaking a glass sliding door is only one way that burglars have entered homes.

Q: What does the solicitor’s permit look like? Will a “No Solicitor” sign make it illegal to solicit?

A: See the images below for examples of our Solicitor’s Permit, including the Certificate for Charitable Organizations. If you have a “No Solicitor” sign on your home, solicitors may not knock on your door or try to solicit you. However, this rule does not apply to individuals or groups exercising freedom of speech, such as political volunteers encouraging residents to vote for a candidate. These individuals are also not subject to Solicitor Permit requirements.

Solicitor Permit Sample ID



Charitable Organization Solicitation Certificate of Registration



Q: Do “Church People” fall into the non-profit group who do not need a permit to solicit?

A: Solicitor Permits are only required for organizations that are looking to sell something. However, individuals looking to share their thoughts or exercise freedom of speech, such as volunteers for faith-based organizations or political campaigns, are not required to obtain a Solicitor Permit.

Q: Are Sheriff slides on the website?

A: Yes, the slides from the Neighborhood Watch Joint Meeting are available on the City website at www.saratoga.ca.us/stayingsafe.

Q: What to watch for with vacant homes being remodeled?

A: The remodeling of homes brings in different contractors and as a result, the activity that otherwise may be suspicious, in fact is not. A key indicator of the possibility that a work crew may not be a contractor is the time that the “work” is being performed. Are the contractors working late in the evening, early in the morning when most of the previous work was being performed during the afternoon time period? Certainly anytime a resident feels that “work” is suspicious, the Sheriff’s Office would like to be contacted so that they can confirm that the workers are legitimate contractors and not thieves.

Q: Do we report people sleeping in cars parked at the curb?

A: Yes, although sleeping in a vehicle within the city limits is governed by city ordinance 9-15.065, the Sheriff's Office should be contacted so that the welfare of the occupants is assessed. What may seemingly be someone sleeping in a vehicle may in fact be something different.

Q: How can we tell how much of our neighborhood is already covered by Neighborhood Watch? I see a sign at the end of our street, but are not sure if we are a part of it.

A: The City is starting to build a registry of Neighborhood Watch groups. If you want to know if your neighborhood is part of an existing group, contact the City for additional information at 408.868.1269 or cbothelio@saratoga.ca.us.

Q: What do residents do who don't have use of a computer?

A: City staff and the Sheriff's Office are available to help provide information and materials to residents who don't have access to a computer. You can call the City at 408.868.1269 or the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office at 408.425.6829.

Q: Will we be able to install a security camera on a public street light pole or power pole to get a good view of cars and license plates?

A: Currently, the City Code does not allow for residents to install security cameras on City light poles or within the City right-of-way. The City Council is planning on discussing these restrictions at their December 7, 2016 meeting.

Q: For security camera installation, is there a guideline to avoid intruding on your neighbor's privacy?

A: The installation of cameras on private property is the sole responsibility of the homeowner. If privacy concerns are noted, the Sheriff's Office recommends talking with your neighbors so that an agreement can be reached outlining the areas that will be recorded.

Q: What's the restraint for the false alarm?

A: In the event of an alarm going off, the Sheriff's Office will assess whether the alarm was activated as a result of a reasonable cause or if it was a false alarm. If the Sheriff's Office determines that it is a false alarm, the City is informed. If there is more than one false alarm per calendar year, the City may charge a False Alarm Call Response Fee (broken down below).

False Alarm Call response Fee – Per Calendar Year

1 st False Alarm in a Calendar Year	No Charge
2 nd False Alarm in a Calendar Year	\$100
3 rd False Alarm in a Calendar Year	\$200
4 th False Alarm in a Calendar Year	\$300
5 th False Alarm in a Calendar Year	\$400
6 th False Alarm in a Calendar Year	\$500
Each Subsequent False Alarm in a Calendar Year	\$600