

RiverPark Neighborhood Watch

Oxnard Crime Watch and Citizen Patrol



Policy and Procedure Handbook

Confidential - Police and Watch Members Only



Prepared by the RiverPark Neighborhood Watch Team

First Printing ~ City of Oxnard ~ October 2007

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Letter from the Chief of Police	3
Introduction to the RiverPark Watch Program	4
Our Mission	4
Program Organization and Membership	4
Assignments.....	6
New Member Recruitment and Training	6
Patrol Techniques	6
Locations Requiring Special Handling	6
The Schools	6
Parks	7
Construction Sites	7
General Patrol Guidance	7
Some Not-so-Obvious Things to Consider	8
Things to Consider Concerning Vehicles	9
Other Unusual Situations You Should Report	9
What Happens When I Call the Police?	10



Letter from the Chief of Police



John Crombach
Chief of Police

Police Department

Mike Matlock
Assistant Chief

R. Jason Benites
Assistant Chief

Scott Whitney
Assistant Chief

September 2007

Dear River Park Neighborhood Watch Members,

First of all, congratulations on your volunteer citizen group getting organized and taking the crucial first steps in making your neighborhood a safer place for everyone. You have truly promoted a safer and more cohesive neighborhood by involving citizens.

We also want to congratulate you on this current effort to develop a policy and procedure handbook for your group. The City of Oxnard's Neighborhood Watch program is the cornerstone of our crime prevention programs. We appreciate the active volunteer participation of citizens in cooperation with law enforcement.

The Neighborhood Watch Program has continually promoted a valuable partnership between your residential community and the Oxnard Police Department. Neighborhood Watch crime prevention programs are a proven and effective means to substantially reduce not only the incidence of graffiti or theft in a geographic area, but deter other more serious crimes as well. Through your combined effort you have directly let the Department know what issues are important to you as community members, allowing the Department to focus on those specific issues.

The Oxnard Police Department actively supports the Neighborhood Watch Program. Using such innovative crime prevention techniques will promote a sustained attack on crime in your neighborhood. This community-based philosophy empowers the Department and community members to share ownership, commitment, and accountability for solving problems and keeping the public safe and secure. The Oxnard Police Department is committed to providing quality service and fostering partnerships with all community members through ongoing daily, direct, and positive contacts. We are committed to being responsive to community needs, promoting mutual trust and delivering a quality of service that meets or exceeds the standards and expectations of the people we serve.

We advocate continuing to improve the quality of life here in Oxnard through this police-community partnership with the River Park Neighborhood Watch. Keep up the good work!



John Crombach, Chief

Oxnard Police Department

Police Department
251 South C Street • Oxnard, CA 93030-5789
(805) 385-7600 • Fax (805) 483-8408 • <http://oxnardpd.org>



Introduction to the RiverPark Watch Program

The RiverPark neighborhood is the Oxnard residential area bounded by the Santa Clara River on the west, Detroit Drive on the east, Garonne Street on the north, and Route 101 on the south.

When it is completed, RiverPark will include 1,800 new homes, 3 new schools, 14 parks and 3 commercial areas including a hotel/convention center.

The RiverPark Neighborhood Watch will expand as needed to incorporate additional residences. The RiverPark neighborhood lies within Oxnard Police Department's Beat 12 administrative Area and has a Beat Coordinator assigned to assist the neighborhood watch team. Before its final completion and transfer to the public domain, the RiverPark community is also patrolled by two private security firms – Securitas and HBL.

Our Mission

The RiverPark Neighborhood Watch Program exists to keep our neighborhood safe, clean and crime free.

Neighborhood Crime Watch Program:

- Acts as a liaison between law enforcement and the community.
- Informs the Police and security of issues and areas of concern to the community.
- Identifies potential crime and neighborhood safety problems.
- Promotes a cohesive neighborhood by involving citizens.
- Deters crime.

Program Organization and Membership

The RiverPark Neighborhood Watch Program is staffed and supported by residents of the RiverPark Community. Positions are described below; Figure 1 is an organizational diagram showing positional relationships. The Community Coordinator is the only elected position on the NWP staff, all other positions are appointed by the Community Coordinator.

Community Coordinator

- Responsible for the proper management of the RiverPark NWP in execution of its Mission.
- Primary liaison between the NWP and Oxnard Police Department, Community Security, and Neighborhood Associations.
- Approval authority for purchase requests using NWP funds.
- Approves monthly patrol schedule.

Watch Coordinator

- It is anticipated that, as the RiverPark Community expands, more Watch Coordinators will be designated for specific neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods within the Community.
- Primary operational assistant to the Community Coordinator.



- Serves as acting Community Coordinator when required.
- Operational liaison with Oxnard Police Department and Community Security.
- Maintains Appendixes B through F via the Administrative Assistant.
- Assigns mentors to new NWP members and certifies their readiness to be added to the watch schedule.
- Develops and refines patrol plans.
- Develops monthly patrol schedule.
- Maintains Issues Database reported by Patrol members.
- Maintains patrol gear inventory.

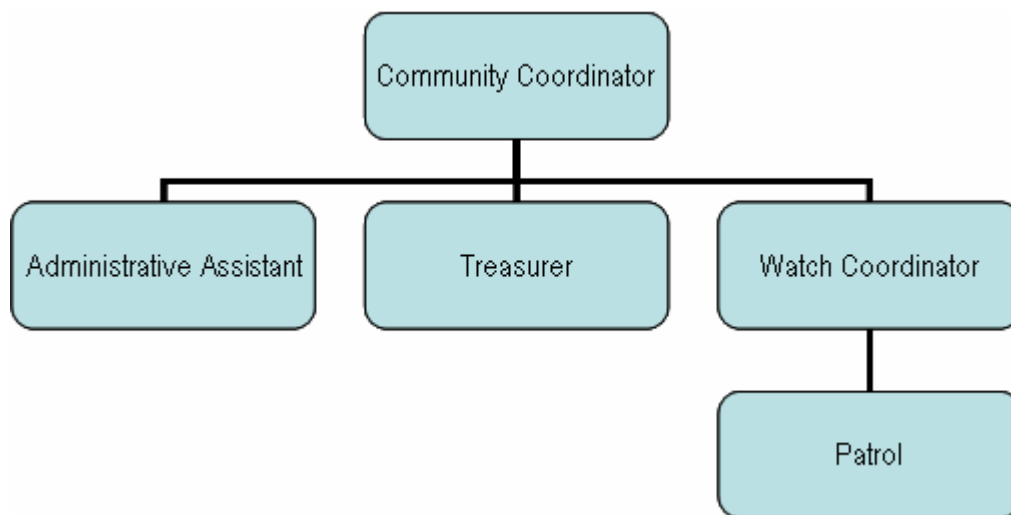
Administrative Assistant

- Primary administrative assistant to the Community Coordinator.
- Maintains Community Information database and NWP Roster (Appendix A).
- Disseminates updates and notices directly to members of the NWP and to the Community at large via the Community Coordinator.
- Ensures the NWP Handbook is current and formally redistributes annually or after any major changes).
- Conducts an annual audit of NWP financial records and report results to the NWP via the Community Coordinator.

Treasurer

- Primary financial assistant to the Community Coordinator.
- Manages NWP funds and maintains financial/purchase records.
- The only individual designated to make purchases using NWP funds.
- Monitors the status of NWP account and makes recommendations to the NWP via the Community Coordinator regarding fund raisers, equipment replacement, etc.

Figure 1



Assignments

Driving and Walking Patrol Assignment Selection

Every two months the RiverPark Neighborhood Watch group gathers for a potluck dinner and short informative program. At this potluck the next quarter's calendar is available and members' sign up for the open dates and times that suit their schedule.



Some active members have employment requirements which dictate when they can be scheduled, so the Watch Coordinator may place them on appropriate dates in advance. The Watch Coordinator will send out patrol schedules for patrol volunteers and will request a reply as to whether or not the schedule is suitable. Patrols are done in pairs and two 30 minute patrols will be done during an assignment period. The patrol schedule is flexible and the Watch Coordinator will attempt to assign patrol areas near member's homes.

In addition to driving patrols, Walking Patrols are available. These members will walk around the neighborhood and/or their assigned area.

New Member Recruitment and Training

Prospective members may sign up to volunteer for patrols via our website or by contacting the Community Coordinator or Watch Coordinator. and that there is a monthly 1-hour training session. New volunteers will also be assigned to an experienced patrol volunteer for their first patrol watch.

The Watch coordinate screens prospective members. 1 hour training sessions for new members are held monthly. New members will be assigned to an experienced patrol volunteer for their first patrol.

Patrol Techniques

In general, a Neighborhood Watch patrol is a non-confrontational, observation and reporting service provided to the neighborhood. Leave policing and law enforcement to the trained professionals at the Oxnard Police Department. The group never serves as an extension of City Code Enforcement.



If suspected criminal activity is observed while on patrol, report it immediately using a cellular telephone (805-385-8307). Be sure to identify yourself as a member of the RiverPark Neighborhood Watch. Withdraw to a location where you can continue to observe the suspected crime location and record notes until the police arrive. There are more specific suggestions provided in the following sections.

Locations Requiring Special Handling

There are several locations that are unique and require some special information. These areas include Schools, parks, and Construction Sites.

The Schools

Rio Del Mar Elementary School



Neighborhood Watch 7

The Rio Del Mar Elementary School, located at 3150 Thames River Drive, should be visually swept from at least two sides with vehicle headlights and the spotlight to determine if there are on the school grounds.

School grounds are considered closed at dusk except in the case of a special event. If you see people in on the school grounds after closing and can easily talk to them, let them know the park closes at dusk. Call the Security Company and report your observations if you believe the violators will not heed your suggestion or may be creating a future problem. The Security Company will cruise the area and follow up as required.

Rio Vista Middle School

The Rio Vista Middle School, located at 3050 Thames River Drive, should be visually swept from at least two sides with vehicle headlights and the spotlight to determine if there are on the school grounds.

School grounds are considered closed at dusk except in the case of a special event. If you see people in on the school grounds after closing and can easily talk to them, let them know the park closes at dusk. Call the Security Company and report your observations if you believe the violators will not heed your suggestion or may be creating a future problem. The Security Company will cruise the area and follow up as required.

Parks

East Park

East Park, located between Kiawah River Drive and Indus Place, should be visually swept from at least two sides with vehicle headlights and the spotlight to determine if there are people in the center of the park. The area where the playground, tennis courts and bathrooms are located should be of concern.

The park is closed after sunset. If you see people in the park after closing and can easily talk to them, let them know the park closes at sunset. Call the Security Company and report your observations if you believe the violators will not heed your suggestion or may be creating a future problem. The Security Company will cruise the area and follow up as required.

Vineyard Park

Vineyard Park, located between Detroit Drive and Smoky Mountain Drive, should be visually swept with vehicle headlights and the spotlight to determine if there are people in the center of the park. The area where the playground, basketball courts and bathrooms are located should be of concern.

The park is closed after sunset.. If you see people in the park after closing and can easily talk to them, let them know the park closes at sunset. Call the Security Company and report your observations if you believe the violators will not heed your suggestion or may be creating a future problem. The Security Company will cruise the area and follow up as required.

Construction Sites

A construction site is any area that currently does not have residents living on the property or an area with a fence around its perimeter. Scan the area with your headlights and/or spotlight as you drive around these areas. Watch for cars parked on the construction site and people loitering on the property.



General Patrol Guidance

Generally, anything that seems even slightly out of the ordinary for the neighborhood or for the time of day may signal criminal activity. Follow the guidance in the flowchart (Appendix H) and complete the Incident Report Form (Appendix E) if necessary.





Learn the neighborhood streets by name and location. Know the name of the street, what block you are driving through, and the name of the intersection or cross street. This will be useful when you see something of interest and want to make a note or telephone a report in the middle of a block.

As you drive the streets in the RiverPark neighborhood, watch for suspicious smoke or fire, street lights that are cycling (on/off) or completely out, vehicles that appear to have been abandoned (graffiti, vandalism, broken lights/glass, etc.), wayward grocery carts, trees/limbs down, flooded areas, mail boxes not in order or other things an ordinary citizen just driving by may not report. It is part of our job to notice and report such minor annoyances to keep the neighborhood safe. Contacts and phone numbers to use in reporting each type of observations are at the end of this section.

Some of the most obvious and serious things to watch for and report include:

- A stranger entering a home when the owner is known to be away.
- Screaming or shouting (a fight, robbery, assault).
- Open garage doors.
- Graffiti.
- Smoke or fire.
- Person removing car parts, license plates, or gasoline.
- Person looking into parked cars (opportunity theft).
- Breaking glass or other explosive noises (accident, break-in, vandalism).
- Persons loitering around schools or parks (sexual predators, drug dealers).



Some Not-so-Obvious Things to Consider



Not every stranger who comes into your neighborhood is a criminal. There are many perfectly legitimate door-to-door sales and service people conducting business in Oxnard. Criminals, however, take advantage of this by pretending to be a legitimate business representative. After all, if criminals looked like criminals, there would be no issue spotting them.

- Following are some suspicious situations you might observe and report -- and what they might mean:
- Persons going door-to-door in your neighborhood. If they look into windows, appear to be trying doors to see if they're unlocked, or go to a side or back yard, they may be burglars.
- A person loitering in front of a home or business is suspicious if the residents are away or if the business is closed. This person may be the lookout for a burglary in progress.
- Anyone tampering with or forcing entry into a building or vehicle is suspicious anytime, anywhere.



Neighborhood Watch 9

- A person who is running and does not appear to be exercising, especially if carrying property, could be fleeing the scene of a crime.
- Simply carrying property may be regarded as suspicious if it is at an unusual hour, in an unusual place, if the person appears to be trying to conceal the property, or if the property is not wrapped or bagged as if it were purchased.
- A person exhibiting mental problems or odd physical behavior may be injured, under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, or in need of psychiatric help.
- Heavy foot traffic to and from a residence may indicate narcotics activity or a fencing operation (buying and selling stolen property). Report this if it occurs on a regular basis or during unusual hours.

Things to Consider Concerning Vehicles

- Any vehicle without lights at night, cruising slowly, or following a course that seems aimless or repetitive is suspicious in any location, but particularly so in areas of schools, parks, and playgrounds. Occupants may be "casing" for a burglary or robbery, or they could possibly be drug dealers or sex offenders.
- Parked, occupied vehicles are worth noting, especially if seen at unusual hours. It could be a possible lookout for a crime, even if the occupants appear to be lovers. Make a note of the car's description and license plate. Check back a little later in your patrol.
- Vehicles being loaded with valuables are suspicious if parked at a closed business or residence where the occupants are away, even if the vehicle appears to be a legitimate commercial unit. Professional thieves will often take the time and trouble to customize their vehicles with special signs in order to move freely without attracting attention and raising suspicion.
- Apparent business transactions conducted from a vehicle, especially around schools or parks may be indicative of drug sales.
- Persons being forced into vehicles, especially if female and/or juvenile, may mean a possible kidnapping.
- An unfamiliar vehicle parked in a neighborhood may be stolen.

Other Unusual Situations You Should Report

- On-going vehicle "repair" operations at a non-business location could mean a "chop shop" where stolen cars are stripped, repainted, or altered.
- Open or broken windows and doors at a home or business could mean a burglary still in progress or already completed. Report this for police investigation only; do not approach the scene yourself.
- Gunshots, screaming, the sounds of a fight, persons chasing others on foot or in cars, unusual barking of dogs - anything suggesting foul play, danger, disturbance of the peace, or criminal activity - should be immediately reported.



While some, if not all, of the suspicious circumstances described above could have logical and legitimate explanations. The Oxnard Police Department would rather investigate a potential criminal situation and find nothing than be called after it is already too late and someone has been victimized. Also, any suspicious circumstance should also be reported to the RiverPark Neighborhood Watch



Watch Coordinator once the Oxnard Police Department has been notified. All necessary information can be found Incident Report Form.

What Happens When I Call the Police?

All calls to the Oxnard Police Department's Communications Center are prioritized according to the seriousness of the situation, NOT simply according to the order in which they are received.

If you call the police, identify yourself by name, provide the telephone number you are using and say that you are with the RiverPark Neighborhood Watch. Please be prepared to provide as much of the following information as possible when it applies:

- What crime or problem are you reporting?
- Where did the incident happen (Address/Location)?
- Did you observe it happen?
- Are there witnesses and where are they?
- When/Where did it happen?
- Is anyone injured?
- Description of vehicles (including Color, Year, Make, Body, and License).
- Description of suspects (including race, sex, age, height, weight, hair, eyes, facial hair, clothing, and any other identifying characteristics).



Always Describe individual's clothing Head to Toe, Outside to Inside:

- Hat
 - Coat or Jacket
 - Shirt (long or short sleeved)
 - Pants
 - Socks
 - Shoes
- Reporting Party information.
 - Direction of flight (street and direction) if they ran or drove away.
 - Was a weapon involved (gun, knife, bat, etc.)?

While it may seem as though you are being asked many questions, the information is also for the safety of the responding officers. The dispatcher is attempting to gather as much information about the situation as possible so that the officers will have a clearer picture of what they may encounter when they arrive. Please, remain on the line, calm and cooperate with the dispatcher.

