



How to Establish Vertical Neighbourhood Watch in Your Building

What is Vertical Neighbourhood Watch?

Neighbourhood Watch is simple: keep your eyes open around your neighbourhood and, if you see anything suspicious - people, vehicles or activities - call the Police by dialling 911.

Vertical Neighbourhood Watch (or “Vertical Watch”) is Neighbourhood Watch in vertical neighbourhoods: apartments and condominiums.

Vertical Neighbourhood Watch is neighbours helping neighbours, by watching out for them to discourage and prevent crime from occurring. The “Golden Rule” of Vertical Neighbourhood Watch: You watch out for your neighbours and your neighbours watch out for you. Vertical Neighbourhood Watch is also neighbours helping the Toronto Police Services, by being their extra “eyes and ears” to report crime and practice crime prevention.

If you see something that is either (a) a crime taking place, or (b) out-of-the-ordinary and suspicious: Call 911.

Vertical Neighbourhood Watch is only as active as you are.

When to call 911	Less Urgent Calls to Police
<p>Call 911 only when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's urgent and important: a crime may be in progress and police, ambulance or fire assistance is needed right away. • Someone's health or safety is at risk. 	<p>If you don't need urgent help but need to call the police to give them information or ask questions, call Toronto Police Services at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 416-808-2222 and ask to be transferred to your local Toronto Police Services Division Office.

How to Establish Vertical Neighbourhood Watch in Your Building:

1. **Start with having a meeting**, preferably in your building or nearby. Weekday evenings are best, starting at about 7:30 pm to give people time to get home and have dinner beforehand. Your condo or tenants’ association, or property manager can help you book a meeting room in your building. Let them know about your plans to organize your building to have a Vertical Neighbourhood Watch group. If your building does not have a meeting room, try a nearby building, school gym or church basement.
2. **Invite everyone to come.** With your landlord’s or condo board’s permission, advertise the meeting with notices in the elevators and in other common areas (front and back entrances, laundry rooms, etc.). Start advertising 10 to 14 days before your meeting so people can plan their schedules to come.

3. **Get to know everyone involved with security in your building:** the security company (if there is one), the property manager and staff, the doorman (if you have one), the condo or tenant association people, and the cleaning staff. They are all more “eyes and ears” for your building. Invite them to come to your meeting or meet with them afterwards, during business hours, to discuss what was learned and of concern at your meeting.
4. **Invite your local Crime Prevention Officer** or another police officer. Vertical Neighbourhood Watch groups are often started in response to an outbreak of some crime in your neighbourhood. The initial meeting is a perfect time to address that crime issue, determine what to do to minimize the likelihood of it recurring and addressing other potential crime risks in your neighbourhood.
5. **At the meeting:**
 - a. **Distribute crime prevention information** (like that on this sheet), crime stats for your area and what can be done to reduce the likelihood of specific types of crime that are affecting your building.
 - b. **Get a list of those who attend** the meeting so you’ll have a contact list for future communication (especially by email).
 - c. **Ask for volunteers** to help you spread the word about crime prevention and help you organize further activities.
 - d. **Make an Action Plan of what’s to happen next and who’s to do it.** The best meetings are those that generate an Action Plan as to what to do next, before the end of the meeting.
 - e. **Announce the date, time (or week) and the topic for your next meeting.**

Once you are up and running:

1. Get and share information about crime statistics in your neighbourhood.
 - a. Toronto Police Services collects statistics on crime activities across Toronto. Those statistics are available through the webpage and app: [Toronto Police Service Crime App \(Year to Date\)](#);
 - b. Consider subscribing to Toronto Police Services Community Alert Crime Prevention Bulletins:
 - i. first: [sign up](#); and then
 - ii. manage your subscription by subscribing to the bulletin from your TPS Division.
2. Vertical neighbourhoods are often at risk because of the way the building and its surroundings were designed. That design can be changed to be safer by adding

lighting, reducing blind spots or using other architectural tricks to solve security problems. Ask your Crime Prevention Officer about having Toronto Police Services do a **CPTED audit** of your building. CPTED is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design¹ and can offer suggestions as to how to make your building and its immediate surroundings not only be safer but also feel safer.

3. Get and share information about what you can do to prevent crime in your building. Please see the resources on our website at CrimePreventionTO.org
4. Let us know about your group and your activities.
 - a. Let us know what you are doing by emailing Info@CrimePreventionTO.org.
 - b. In 2018, we're going to try to map every Neighbourhood Watch and Vertical Neighbourhood Watch Group in Toronto – stay tuned to our website for updates;
 - c. Consider joining our [Neighbourhood Watch Toronto](#) Facebook group.
5. Organize regular meetings and arrange for guest speakers on crime prevention topics of interest to your neighbours. Advertise them throughout the building to raise interest in your meeting and raise awareness about your Vertical Neighbourhood Watch program.
6. Organize events in your building that brings your vertical community together: summer BBQ, street festival, etc. The more community feeling you create, the more likely community members will care about and watch out for each other.
7. Keep watching out for one another!

Words of Wisdom from Jane Jacobs

from "The Death and Life of Great American Cities", 1961

"...there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street."

¹ For more information on CPTED, visit <http://cptedontario.ca/>