

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Block Watch?

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

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

When your Block Watch is up and running and signs are installed, crime rates drop significantly. Also, depending who your home insurance provider is, you may be eligible for a reduction on your home insurance. Recently, many insurance providers have been opting out of a discount. You are best served to ask your insurance company if you are eligible. The reduction applies regardless of whether you are a Block Captain or Participant. Block Watches create a sense of community because you begin to know and see your neighbours as real people, not just the person who lives down the road. It also creates better communication between your neighbours and the police, as well as creating a sense of security in your neighbourhood.

What does it cost?

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

How do I pay for the signs?

Payment can be made by cheque payable to the City of Nanaimo or by debit or cash at the front counter of the Nanaimo RCMP detachment.

What is responsible for the Block?

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 (PIC). This check is provided free of charge by the City of Nanaimo and can be obtained from the staff at the front counter of the Nanaimo RCMP Detachment. The front counter is open Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm, and applicants will be required to produce two pieces of approved government issued ID (BC DL, BC ID, passport, etc.).

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

It usually takes between 3-4 hours. After completing your PIC, 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 neighbours who are interested in participating in the Block Watch. This can be the time consuming part, but most Captains and Co-Captains say it's worthwhile and fun and is the first step in getting to

know their neighbours!

Do we need to hold regular meetings after we are set up and do they have to be at my house?

To maintain active Block Watch status, Captains and Co-Captains will need to hold at least one meeting per year. The meeting can be at your or your neighbours house or backyard or at a local community hall or school. The frequency of these ‘maintenance’ meetings is entirely up to you. Some ideas may be to have meetings in the summer and plan a neighbourhood BBQ around it or contact the City of Nanaimo to obtain information on hosting a Block Party.

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

The safety of your home and that of your neighbours is everyone’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 neighbourhood; it will be from all parts of Nanaimo. At the initial Block Watch introduction presentation, the program coordinator will review when it is appropriate to call 911 or the non-emergency number to contact police of an incident.

What do I do when I go door to door, what if I get bombarded with questions?

When going door to door, you are simply asking your neighbours if they are 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. In order to complete the participant list form, 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. Captains will create an email distribution list with all participants’ email addresses in order to disseminate future information.

What do I do with the information gathered?

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.ca

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

There are several active Block Watches that are on strata properties. The only difference is 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, 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 Nanaimo RCMP and depending on the circumstances of the incident, they should call the non-emergency line at 250-754-2345 or 911.

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

Neighbourhood Watch has not existed for many years and was replaced by Block Watch. If a Block Watch is created in a neighbourhood where a “Neighbourhood Watch” sign exists, the Block Watch sign will replace the existingsign.

How do I get started?

If you want to get started or find out more about Block Watch, contact Constable Gary O'Brien at 250-755-4469 or by email at gary.obrien@rcmp-grc.gc.ca