

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY MEETING OVERVIEW

The following is an overview of the recent meeting held on Wednesday, January 30th at the Clara Barton First Aid Squad regarding neighborhood and home safety and overview of the neighborhood block watch program.

Thank you to Lt. Dudash and Officer Jackson of the Edison Police Department for the information and presentation.

Edison Police Contact Details

Emergency	911
Non-Emergency Calls for Police Vehicle Dispatch	(732) 248-7400
Non-Emergency Calls for Fire or Ambulance	(732) 248-7500
Edison Crime Stoppers Tip Line (Confidential)	(877) 750-TIPS

[Edison Police Department \(Website\)](#)

[Edison Police Department \(Additional Numbers\)](#)

Websites to Connect w/ Township & Neighbors / Stay Informed

[Nixle](#)

This is the alert system that the Township uses to get information out on incidents. Once you sign up will send you either emails, texts or phone calls with alerts on a variety of items.

[Facebook.com](#) (CB Neighborhood Block Watch)

[NextDoor.com](#) (General Site)

[www.ClaraBartonNeighborhood.org](#)

ClaraBartonNeighborhood@gmail.com

** Click on links to be taken directly there*

General Information

Elements of a Crime: There are three characteristics which enable for a crime to happen. These are (1) desire to commit the crime, (2) ability to commit the crime and (3) opportunity for the crime to occur. Desire and ability are not controllable by law enforcement, citizens or businesses. However, the opportunity to be able to commit a crime can be affected by actions and precautions which can deter someone from being able to do so, at the least to you or the general area.

The following are steps that can be taken to detract or prevent the opportunity from happening.

Neighborhood Watch (General Information)

The Neighborhood Watch is an initiative to be an "Extra Eyes & Ears" approach to crime prevention, creating a proactive community-oriented infrastructure bringing together local officials, law enforcement and citizens for the protection of their communities. Establishing a Neighborhood Watch can deter potential threats.

Note: This does not mean the residents are to be policing the areas themselves and is not advocated for.

Residents know what is common and normal in their area versus something that looks off. Some simple actions that can be taken would be to introduce yourself to your neighbors. Eventually, when those connections stretch across multiple households and then streets a strong network can be created. In the event something looks off, say something by contacting the local law enforcement, or other local points of contacts once a neighborhood watch infrastructure is established.

Personal Safety on Streets

- Surroundings: Be aware of your general surroundings by avoiding "tunnel vision". When walking try to walk facing traffic, as close to the middle as possible to avoid obstructions and to stay away from traffic.
- Stay Alert: Obstruction of vision (example: looking at your phone) or hearing (listening to something with ear buds) detracts sensory ability to detect potential threats and therefore puts your safety at greater risk.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY MEETING OVERVIEW

- ATM's: If an ATM seems out of place, it could be a scanner. Scanners steal card information in order to create duplicates and obtain personal information. Additionally, potential thieves stake out ATM's due to the fact that money transactions occur. When using an ATM, try to use them in well-lit areas.
- Purses: Your safety is of utmost importance, so if you feel your safety is of danger, *Let it Go!* As a general guideline keep purses closed to the body, pushed to the front, under the arms (like a "basket" carry). This makes it less likely someone will be able to either rip it away from you or ability to reach in a grab something without your knowing.
- Wallet: Like purses, wallets are a target for theft. One suggestion is to carry a separate money clip. In a situation most criminals will look for a wallet versus a money clip, so when you hand over the wallet your cash and pertinent items will remain with you in the money clip.
- Strength in Numbers: Travel with a buddy or a group when at all possible.

Vehicle Safety

- Maintenance: Keep your vehicle in good working condition at all time. If your vehicle breaks down for whatever reason (malfunction, flat tire), make sure to get off the roadway and into a well-lit area when possible. *Note: If a flat tire your car is still technically drivable if need be.*
- Gas Level: Try to maintain a half tank of gas at all times. One of the easiest ways to avoid becoming stranded is by ensuring you have gas in your vehicle. Additionally, in cold temperatures such as now (January), at minimum if your vehicle is broken down you will at least be able to keep warm with heat.
- Parking Areas: Try to park in well lit areas away from large obstructions. Park close to businesses when possible. Like with personal safety, check your surrounding areas to be aware.
- Entering Vehicle: When approaching your vehicle be sure to have your keys on hand for quick access to your vehicle. Try to avoid rummaging for your keys as you wait to get into the car as it increases the time frame for a potential criminal to act (reducing the *opportunity*). Additionally, physical keys can be used as a self defense weapon in a physical altercation.
- Keys (Valets and Other): Don't leave all keys on a single key ring. Try to have your vehicle key be able to be detachable, for instance when you leave your car with a valet. There is no need to hand over anything outside of your car key in a situation like that as your other keys generally lead to other valuable areas.
- Garage Door Openers: Most people park with the garage door opener in the front of their car in a visible location. At minimum this should be hidden to lesson the likelihood of a break-in. If the car is outside and broken in to, the opener will be used to allow access into your garage. Many times, items such as tools are kept in the Garage so even if the criminal has no items handy to them, they may be able to break in using your own equipment.
- Lock Your Doors: Many car burglaries happen because the cars are left unlocked. Additionally, keep windows rolled up, even in the warmer months.
- Valuables out of Site: Make sure to keep valuables and packages out of site.
- Being Followed: If you feel you are being followed, drive to a police station or at minimum to a well-lit area.
- Attempted Burglary When in Car: Create attention by flashing your lights, beeping your horn and yelling.
- Charges Cell Phone: Be sure to keep a charged cell phone at all times in the event you become stranded or need assistance.
- Vehicle Safety Kit: It's a good idea to have a safety kit for your car. Some general items to include would be a flash light, fix-a-flat, phone charger, empty gas can, maps, blanket, first aid kit and white cloth to be used as a distress signal if needed.
- Pre-Planned Routes: When Traveling try to set up your route through GPS and review the route. GPS devices generally only account for the quickest time and shortest distance to get from one location to another and do not take into consideration a multitude of variables that could affect your drive.

Home Safety

- Personal Information: For voicemails or house numbers don't use your full name. Keep it brief. Never give personal information to a stranger, whether in person-to-person contact, internet, phone or mail.
- House Numbers: Keep house numbers visible so if an officer or medical assistance needs to locate your home they can identify by the number on the front. Trim bushes or trees and keep the numbers lit.
- Answering Doors: Check doors before opening to know who is there. Don't be afraid to talk through the door as your safety is the most important thing.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY MEETING OVERVIEW

- Keys: Don't hide spare keys in exterior areas that may allow entrance to your home.
- Documents: Shred important documents such as tax returns, credit card receipts and medical bills which may contain personal information. *Note: Dates and locations for shredding events [can be found here](#).*
- Safety Deposit Box consider. If you feel uncomfortable leaving valuables in a safety deposit box at a bank, the safety box at your home should be one that is bolted to a surface (floor) to deter someone from being able to pick it up and leaving with it. If the safety box is small enough and doesn't weigh enough it can easily be grabbed and removed from the area.
- Working Alarm System / Panic Button: Alarm systems give you a direct link to the local police in the event of an intrusion, with many of them having a sound alarm to alert your surrounding area of a break in or event. Likewise, a Panic Button can also set off an alarm to startle an intruder and provide you time to act.
- Item Identification: Most valuables and expensive items have some form of identification / serial numbers that can be traced. Take a record of these items so that the item can be traced back to your ownership. One suggestion, for items that do not have ID's, is to purchase a personal engraver so that you can produce your own code or insignia for identification. Tracking items is not only helpful in a theft/burglary but also in an event such as a fire.
Note: The township calls this type of measure "Operation ID".
- Garage Doors: Make sure garage doors are closed as the garage is usually the 2nd most access point into a home. Generally, people leave spare keys or have tools in the garage which then presents an opportunity for an intruder to enter your home.
- Motion Lights & Timers: Keep an outside light(s) on at night or have motion lights so when something moves within its reach it automatically turns on. There are also systems out there (such as *BLINK*) which can be installed so when a sensor goes off a photograph is taken simultaneously.
- Mail while Away: One of the biggest items indicating a home is vacant is mail or newspaper buildup. If you are leaving for an extended period of time have your mail stopped or tell your neighbor to pick it up for you. Likewise, trash cans not placed out or left out for extended periods of time can also be indicators of vacancy.

Telephone & In-Person Scams

- Requests for Payments Over Phone: If you owe a balance to a utility company or business, they will reach out via mail with a paper record of the request for payment. If a company is calling for payment over the phone, *RED FLAG!* As mentioned before, do not give information out over the phone. Whether in person or over phone, if questions don't seem "normal" (such as asking "do you have security, do you have camera's, etc."), stop the conversation.
- Solicitors Permit: For someone to come up to your home (many times posing as a utility worker, municipal employee or other) and try and sell you a product, they are required by town ordinance to have a solicitor's permit. If they can not present this to you, tell them to leave. On the permit there will be the stated times that the individual can be soliciting and is issued through the clerk's office.
Note: The ordinance was recently changed so that solicitors can not come out during the night time, especially during the earlier nighttime's during daylight savings.
- Utility Meter Checks: In many newer homes the meters are on the outside. If you are sure your meter is outside, but an individual is pressing that they need to check inside, tell them to leave and that you'll be calling the authorities.
- Employment Verification: If you are unsure if a person is an actual representative of a company, call a number you trust to verify the employment. Many times, if you are presented a number to call they are linked to someone who is not an actual representative and is meant to give the impression as such. Remember you *do not have to talk to them*.
Note: You can call the police department to come out and help confirm if you are suspicious. Do not wait to call if you have a suspicion.

Surveillance (General Notes)

As prices begin to drop more and more cameras are being installed for general surveillance. As reference, the township cannot regulate businesses or homeowners to have surveillance, although advise that it is in the public interest considering the information it can provide. When an incident occurs law officials will canvass the surrounding area for information and to see if there are video camera's that may have caught the suspect in action or getting away.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY MEETING OVERVIEW

The Township is currently working on a program that would allow residents and businesses to register that they have a camera so if an incident occurs, they can help pin point locations to request to see video to gather evidence (*Note: This would not provide authorities the ability to look at your video/footage without your permission*). This program is figured to have a soft launch in the near future and when ready to be fully unveiled will have a full press release.

General Notes & Topics

- **Call Immediately:** When an incident happens, *CALL IMMEDIATELY!* The police would rather be bothered than not. When reporting an incident, try to be as descriptive as possible. **Do not leave messages for important items, call 911 or hot line for immediate response.**
- **Incident Response:** Whenever you call the police, a car will be sent. This may not be immediate, but some one will come out to check on the area when a call is reported.
- **Officers in Edison:** Currently there are 178 law enforcement officers in the Edison Police Department.
- **Media & Local Reports:** When looking for information on an incident look for official statements from authorities. If local to the Township this will come from the Chief of Police. If from the County, it will be the County Prosecutor and the State Prosecutor from the State. Sometimes the media will try to get a story out without verification (example: the false report of the first arrest for the Speedway suspect). There is a fine line between getting information out and then information that could mess up an investigation.
- **Phone Disposal:** When disposing of your phone at minimum reset to factory default. Also make sure that if it contains an SD card to remove it, as it may not be reset even if you do the phone reset. The phone SD cards are approx. a quarter to a third of the size of a regular SD card.
- **In Home Security Check:** The Township offers a **free** service where a certified Crime Prevention School officer will come out to your home or business and do a safety analysis. A report will be created providing information where strengths and weaknesses are at your location, providing common sense solutions to help create a safer environment.
- **Safe Places for E-Commerce Transactions:** The township recently passed an ordinance designated the Police Headquarters Lobby as an exchange area 24 hours a day for internet transactions, where cameras will record the transaction.

Written by John Poyner