



**Sandy Springs Police Department  
5995 Barfield Road Sandy Springs, GA 30328**

*Block Captain*

Sandy Springs Police Neighborhood Watch

**What are the duties of the block captains?**

Your main function is to ensure the line of communication between the department and the community residents is a smooth one. One good way to help you stay in touch is create and maintain an e-mail group consisting of your zone or block residents. You can easily create an e-mail distribution list on Outlook or Yahoo, or whatever e-mail server you use. I have found that there is no strict and structured way of performing the block-captain duties. Whatever works best for you is fine with me.

**Inventory**

Many block captains will inventory resident information. This includes name, address, phones, e-mail, family members as well as vehicles. Vehicles are normally the subject of a lookout. Having a current list of resident cars will, many times, be the answer to suspicious surroundings. For example, if someone reports to the block captain that they saw a car driving in the subdivision and it seemed suspicious, it may be easily explained if the block captain has that car on hers or his list of resident vehicles. The inventory list is a means of keeping up with the resident's cars. Keep in mind cars are bought and sold all the time so this list needs to be updated monthly. In some cases, for privacy reasons, residents do not want to provide this information. That's fine. It is an option only.

**Communication**

You'll get an e-mail report from me weekly, normally on Fridays. It either goes to the coordinator who then forwarded to the block captains or the residents directly, or it goes to you. Make sure that your group is receiving the reports. Make sure there is an avenue for your residents to respond or comment about any crimes that are of interest. Pass along those questions, through the coordinator, to me. In some cases, I'll explain but in others I will not be able to reveal certain information. If it is relevant to the area or person, I'll make every effort to provide information for your group.

Stay in contact with your group and try to meet quarterly if not monthly. Please include the coordinator. Make it more interesting. A typical meeting can take place at someone's home and it should be social and very informal. The agenda should be to discuss recent problems, accomplishments, and share ideas. Some topics you may want to look at include lighting. Common areas around the pool and tennis courts are often vandalized in the summer months. Lighting is always an effective deterrent. Motion sensor lighting is the best. Lights can be mounted but need to be mounted high, away from rock-throwing vandals. Hardware and security landscaping are also effective deterrents to burglars and vandals.

**House Checks**

Make sure everyone has the house-check form and keep a copy, provide a copy to the coordinator, and of course, the police via e-mail, [Laurence.Jacobs@sandyspringsga.org](mailto:Laurence.Jacobs@sandyspringsga.org) or mail

Community Affairs, Senior Officer Larry Jacobs  
770-551-3328  
[Laurence.Jacobs@sandyspringsga.org](mailto:Laurence.Jacobs@sandyspringsga.org)

at Larry Jacobs, Sandy Springs Police 5995 Barfield Road, Sandy Springs GA 30328, or fax at 770-551-6911.

**Traffic complaints** can also be sent to us via the block captains and coordinator. Your coordinator should have e-mail attachments for house check and traffic complaints.

Your residents need to know when to call the police. Many times we get after-calls and through the investigation we find that someone saw something but assumed that it was nothing, until they found out the next day that it involved a burglary or theft.

About 95% of our calls are unfounded. That is the nature of the business. What is significant is that when we do respond to a call and through an arrest on-scene or as a result of the subsequent investigation, we clear a number of previous cases. Many times we clear 30 or more cases based on the arrest. The moral of the story is to call, even if you aren't sure. First instincts are better than the second.

### **What is suspicious?**

#### **Burglary**

Most residential burglaries occur during the daytime hours. Why? Most people work or run errands during the day. Burglars will cruise the area (called casing in police-talk) to look for home going on the "A-List" Many times a resident will see a car, truck, or van slowly driving down a residential.

In the above scenario, what do you do?

1. First of all, get the type of vehicle, (truck, car, or van) and the color. If possible, get a tag number. If not a complete tag number then whatever partial information you can get. Numbers or letters or any combination will do. What state was the tag and if you don't know, remember the tag colors. Was there any writing on the van? Phone numbers?
2. Who was in the vehicle? Male or female? Were they Caucasian? African-American? Hispanic?
3. How in the heck do I remember all this stuff? Good point. In the warm months people walk and do a lot of things outside. Stuff a ballpoint pen in your pocket if you have a regular walking or jogging schedule. Use your hand and write down the information you want to remember. Don't use the palm. Use the back side or arm. It will wash off later so write down everything you need to.
4. Your cell phone is something that you normally carry with you all the time. Is the vehicle doing something suspicious enough to warrant a 911 call? That is always a judgment call but you have to make it then and there. Let's go back to the vehicle slowly cruising the street. That may be enough to report to your BC or NW coordinator but not an immediate 911 or non-emergency (404-730-7911) call. What if someone or two gets out of the car and walks up to the home and knocks? Still could be legitimate. They could be soliciting for work. They may not be burglars but most communities and their residents have "no-solicitation" policies. Most of the time if they stop at two or more homes, it's a pretty good bet they're soliciting. That would be a reason to call the non-emergency number and report it.

What if someone gets out of the car and walk to the back of the house?

This is a legitimate suspicious act and 911 is an appropriate call. Many burglars prefer to enter the back of homes for concealment.

Remember: it is always better to call than not to call.

#### **What about solicitors?**

Anyone soliciting for commerce is required to obtain a Sandy Springs solicitation permit. Religious groups are exempt from the permitting process. Whether or not you want to listen to someone pitch a product or cause is your business but consider the following: Between stores, magazines, and the Internet, you can buy just about anything you want or need. Door to door fund-raising is sometimes counterfeited. We have recorded several arrests for young persons misrepresenting themselves as basketball team players trying to raise sponsor money. We've recorded complaints of solicitors distracting residents by asking them if they could get a glass of water, and then, while the resident is momentarily gone, steals what is in reach of them. Solicitors are required to avoid neighborhoods who post "No Solicitation" signs. To be sure, it would be best to post a small sign near your front entrance door. The best policy is if you do not want to listen to a solicitor's pitch, be firm and short. If the solicitor has no permit or seems suspicious, call Sandy Springs Police Department. Look for any vehicle that may aid the description for the officers.

Block Captains are the vital link to the program. Stay in touch and make sure your residents have access to our weekly information and forward any and all mail, calls, and concerns to your coordinator and your Sandy Springs Police contact.

Remember: Your role as the block captain as well as the role of the coordinator and the resident members of the neighborhood watch is security and safety. It can be associated with but is not bound to be a part of the homeowner's association. Please leave the politics of your HOA out of the neighborhood watch program. It should be a program that easily puts everyone on the same page.

Set some reasonable goals and accomplish them in your first year. Among them should be to compile an e-mail list. Review it as necessary to update new and changed e-mail addresses. In your first meeting, discuss what problems your residents are concerned about and use that as a starting point.

### **About E-Mail**

E-mail is a great tool. It provides a wide scope of information. It is also the most common avenue of incorrect information and has taken urban legends to a new high. You will receive e-mails from residents who receive them from other people and so on. Anything that concerns important topics on safety needs to be confirmed. A great site for confirming urban legends is [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com).

Some recent UL's include the recent one about entering your ATM code backwards to signal that you're being robbed. The code sends a message to the bank who immediately contacts the police and whatever else it does. Bank security personnel told me they wish they had this type of technology but don't. Another is the "#77" on your cell, to immediately contact any the police agency where you are. Some states have it but Georgia does not. (If you dial 911 on your cell phone, regardless where you are, you will connect to that area's public safety communications center.)

I guess I don't need to remind you that anyone requesting account numbers and / or any other sensitive and transaction numbers are crooks. No one is really going to send you 25% of 33 million dollars, from their war-torn country, just for providing your account number for the transfer! Sounds ridiculous? People respond to these e-mail ads every day!

