

BUSINESS WATCH

Neighborhood & Community Services Department Neighborhood Services Division Crime Prevention Program



Business Watch programs deter and detect crimes and diminish opportunities for crime.

Key Components

Business Watch primarily establishes links among small businesses, and between them and the police. Basically, Business Watch is businesses (sometimes with community groups), taking systematic steps to reduce opportunities for crimes in and around business locations. It includes training business personnel to be eyes and ears for the police. In Business Watch areas, crime prevention police officers and business leaders assist business owners, operators, and employees in

- reporting crime: effectively observing and reporting to police on crimes and suspicious activities that could lead to crime;
- operation identification: marking all equipment, machines, etc., with traceable identification numbers for deterrence and tracing;
- robbery prevention: eliminating "easy prey" crime opportunities;
- burglary prevention: adding security measures to impede criminals, detect criminal activity, and communicate with the police; and
- self-protection: learning to recognize dangerous situations, and learning how to prevent, avoid, or flee them.

Business Watch programs often have a business leader act as the block security chief for the participating businesses. One or more police officers are usually assigned to be the liaison with the Business Watch group. The local civic association or other community groups may also participate, lending extra eyes and ears, especially for periods when the businesses are closed. Sometimes the businesses are linked to each other and to the police through radio or fax machine message trees. Radio-equipped delivery and service vehicles may also become part of Business Watch.

Key Partnerships

Key partnerships are those among the businesses and business people themselves and their organization and leaders. They, in turn, form a key partnership with the local police department, and especially with its crime prevention or watch liaison officers. Other partners can be the local citizens' association, church, Chamber of Commerce, or other groups interested in a safe and prosperous business base in the community.

Applying the Strategy

The Detroit Police Department has worked very actively with blocks of businesses to organize and guide Business Watch programs. The Crime Prevention Section is a very significant part of Detroit's police force. It has developed extensive methodologies and materials for Business Watch, with emphasis on eliminating opportunities for criminal activity. It eliminates the "easy prey" temptation by training business personnel in the skills of perceiving potential crime indicators, protecting themselves, and reporting to the police. Police officers provide blueprints for business groups organizing meetings and designating security chiefs. They provide checklists for shoplifting prevention, bad check controls, internal theft precautions, security of premises, and more. The Detroit police have documented lower crime rates in Business Watch areas.

The Marathon County Sheriff's Department in Wisconsin has developed a Fleetwatch program: employees of firms with two-way communications systems in their vehicles become extra eyes and ears of the police. They report on criminal and suspicious activity, but do not physically intervene.

Contact Information

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