

## HOW TO START A BUSINESS WATCH

Interested business owners should request an initial meeting between merchants and the Howard County police community resource officer.

At the initial meeting:

- Information is collected from potential members
- Procedures are explained
- The “watch area” is defined
- Training on target-hardening measures is provided
- Businesses are scheduled for security surveys
- Police explain how to maintain an effective Business Watch
- Future crime awareness and prevention programs are discussed

## CONTACT US

### Howard County Department of Police

#### *Community Resource Offices*

Harper's Choice Village Center  
Long Reach Village Center  
Oakland Mills Village Center  
Owen Brown Village Center  
Whiskey Bottom Shopping Center  
Wilde Lake Village Center

*Report an emergency*  
911

*Report a non-emergency*  
410-313-2200

*Provide an anonymous tip*  
410-313-STOP

*Request information  
about Business Watch*  
Northern District 410-313-3015  
Southern District 410-313-3755



## HOWARD COUNTY POLICE



## BUSINESS WATCH



## WHAT IS A BUSINESS WATCH?

A Business Watch is similar to a Neighborhood Watch; the concept is for citizens to take an active role in crime prevention — and to become partners with law enforcement. As a business owner or employee, you can serve as the eyes and ears for law enforcement by reporting suspicious people and activities you observe in and around your business.

Merchants regularly monitor suspicious people and activities through daily observations in their working environments. Who better to recognize a problem situation than someone who is familiar with the area? You and your employees are the best defense against potential crimes in your business — and can be helpful sources of information to police.

## E-MAIL, TELEPHONE AND FAX NETWORK

The Business Watch program encourages important information to be passed from merchants to police. It also encourages information sharing among businesses in a timely manner.

If a crime or suspicious incident occurs, the reporting business first calls 911 or the non-emergency line at 410-313-2200. Then, the business representative calls the Business Watch coordinator with the information. The coordinator then puts network outreach in motion, by e-mail, telephone or fax, to disseminate the pertinent information.

This procedure involves all member businesses and requires a minimum time commitment to achieve maximum results.

The network outreach also can be initiated by the police department's community resource officer assigned to that community. Police can use the network to share crime and suspect information, as well as crime prevention tips.

## OPERATION ID

Business owners can reduce their risk of being victims of theft by utilizing Operation Identification to mark their tools, equipment and non-retail items. Burglars and dishonest employees know that Operation ID greatly reduces the opportunity to successfully sell stolen property.

An inventory of marked items, including the makes, models, serial numbers and values, is then kept in a safe place. If the item cannot be engraved, a photo is kept on file.

## SECURITY SURVEY

Member businesses can take advantage of the opportunity to have a security survey conducted by a Howard County police officer. This is part of the target-hardening process, which makes your business less attractive to criminals.

During the survey, the officer reviews the physical design of a member business. In addition to recording existing security features, the officer also makes suggestions regarding locks, alarms, lighting, procedures and potential modifications to the business's physical layout.