

Neighborhood Watch Meeting - Minutes
April 7, 2009

There were approximately 80 people in attendance at the Neighborhood Watch Meeting held on April 7, 2009 at the Valencia Hills Clubhouse. After a brief welcome and introductions by Josy and Steve Block, they turned the floor over to Deputy Laurie Baylis. Deputy Baylis addressed the concerns of the residents, based on the tally of the most popular topics requested: Trash/Recycle Diggers, Charity Scams & Door-to-Door Solicitors. A list of 20 questions that were submitted to Deputy Baylis ahead of time was answered and available on a handout. These questions/answers are included in this recap.

Basic safety – Check the Sheriff’s Department Website: <http://scvsheriff.com/> for tons of information.

Neighborhood Watch – you can sign up with the Sheriff’s Department to receive crime prevention tips: http://www.scvsheriff.com/prog_neighborhood_watch.asp

Crime Reports – you can check www.crimereports.com to see what crimes have been reported in your area.

Trash Diggers

- Call the Sheriff’s Station (255-1121).
- There are ordinances against this.
- Don’t be discouraged if sheriffs don’t arrive right away
- Latest trend - people are stealing metal and metal items from side yards.
- If we observe people we don’t recognize looking through trash cans or driving around the neighborhood with junk in the back of their trucks get as much information / descriptions as possible & contact the Sheriff’s Department.
- “Trash digging” is not a victimless crime. Soon other things take place (i.e. identity theft, burglaries)

Door –to-door Solicitors

- Solicitors must have a license from the county or city UNLESS they are representing a Religious Group, Political Affiliation or selling magazines.
- They must be within the window of 8am to 8pm. After 8pm, they are in violation.
- If solicitors are violent or overly aggressive, call the Sheriff’s Department
- The biggest deterrent is to NOT buy anything from them
- Put a “No Solicitors” sign near your doorbell to discourage solicitors

- Let solicitors know you are home. You do NOT need to open the door, however, some “salespeople” will knock on the door to see if anyone is home. If no one answers, they assume no one is home, and they might try to break your door down to get into your home & rob it.
- Our friends in Old Orchard 1 shared the verbiage they use for little signs that are posted near their doorbells. The signs read:

WARNING: TO ALL SOLICITORS

This community, in accordance with the City of Santa Clarita ,
Confirms the validity of all solicitors, and reports any suspicious
Soliciting activities to the
Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff’s Department

REPORT SUSPICIOUS SOLICITORS to
(661) 255-1121

Current Scams going on in the area:

- “Grandma Scam” – Callers contact older residents posing to be their grandson saying they need money. They ask for personal information over the phone, and from there can wipe out a persons bank account. Visit the following links at the Sheriff’s Department website for more details:

http://www.scvsheriff.com/prog_tips_donation.asp

http://www.scvsheriff.com/prog_tips_seniors.asp

- Craigslist – Scammers are visiting legitimate sites of people selling homes and copying their information, but changing the contact information to their own, and lowering the price significantly. When they are contacted, they ask for all your personal information, and once they have that they can “disappear” and clean you out. In the meantime, the caller thinks they have purchased a home, and when they go to move in, they discover that someone else is living there and that they did not in fact buy the home. **Do not send personal information on the internet.** A legitimate seller will provide a telephone number, and you need to check their credentials, references, etc.

Vehicle Break-Ins

- Don't leave anything of value in your car.
- Remember to LOCK your car doors at night.
- The best place to park your car is in your garage
- The 2nd best place is your driveway.
- Don't leave your garage door clicker in your car if it is parked in your driveway or on the street.
- Don't leave checkbooks, purses, laptops, iPods, cameras, etc. in your car. Not even for a second while unloading groceries (take your purse in the house first, then unload groceries).
- Don't have anything of value visible from your front windows. The idea is that you don't want people who are walking by your home to be able to look inside & see what you have.

Burglary Prevention Tips

- Make sure your doors and windows are locked.
- Don't let your bushes grow higher than your windows.
- Don't store ladders on side of your house. Many of us leave 2nd story windows open, and having a ladder available just simplifies matters for the would-be thief.

Security Issues

- Motion control lights are the best deterrent
- Dogs are also very good deterrents
- Windows / Sliders should be locked, or dowels placed in the tracks to minimize the possibility of someone walking into your back sliding door. Leave sliders open only far enough that no one can squeeze through.
- Front doors need a good quality lock that is heavy duty. New construction now requires front doors to have key locks (inside and outside)
- Home Alarm Systems are great ***if you use them***. Go with a reputable company, check the Better Business Bureau, ask for references, guarantees, special offers, etc. Don't let someone make up stories to sell you a system (i.e. some will say that the police will not respond. They DO respond to all calls. The Alarm Companies contact the Sheriff's Department) Also, don't let them tell you that you will be charged for false alarms. There is NO CHARGE (from the Sheriff's Department) for false alarms. Businesses do incur a charge for more than 2 false alarms, but not residents. Although it is "on the books" to charge for false alarms, it is not enforced. If it were going to change, you would receive at least one years' notice.

- Doggy Doors – the recommendation is that the doors are SMALL. If you have a BIG dog and need a BIG doggy door, it is recommended that the placement of the door leads into a “separate” room that can be secured with a door locking from the inside of the house, but outside of that rooms’ door.
- If solicitors are placing rubber banded advertisements on your door knobs, that’s okay, but if they are jiggling the knob to see if it is unlocked, contact the Sheriff’s Department.
- Make sure you have a phone (or cell phone) in every room in your home. If you are in a bedroom and you think someone has broken into your home, get out of the house if you can safely do so, then contact the Sheriff’s.

Security Cameras

- Make sure cameras are positioned where you want them.
- They can help in determining who is going in and out of our neighborhood
- If cameras are placed on a residents private property, no permission is needed from the city.
- If cameras are requested to be on a city owned pole, or other public entity, the city needs to grant permission before you can do anything.

“Quality of Life” issues

- The Watch Commander is very into “quality of life” issues, and encourages residents to call on anything that compromises your quality of life. This would include “Recycle /Trash Diggers”, “Party Homes”, “Disruptive Teens”, etc.
- If you are having a repeating problem with a particular home, you need to contact the Sheriff’s Department, and to keep calling so there is a log and trends can be picked up.
- There is a “statistical person” at the department that keeps all kinds of stats, and if you call up & say you have made repeated calls on this same problem, the stats can be pulled up on it.
- Be a SQUEAKY WHEEL as there is zero tolerance for quality of life issues.
- A resident reported seeing bonfires extending over the tops of the walls. Bonfires of this magnitude should by all means be reported.
- Some residents expressed concern about giving their personal information to the Department. We were assured that personal information is not shared. Also, if you do not want to be contacted in person after reporting an incident, please tell the front desk that you do not want to be contacted in person. They will then give you a follow-up

call instead of sending a squad car. You can always go to their website to follow-up on the status of an incident.

- If someone is sleeping in a car in front of your house, call the Sheriff's.

Misc. Issues

- There has been a lot of news about kids being molested near Placerita Jr. High School . Out of 3 incidents, there have been 2 arrests. In the penal code it is called molesting, which sounds worse than the actual offense which was harassing. There is not an increased amount of these crimes, but they used to not share as much information. They are favoring erring on the side of caution when it comes to reporting these crimes.
- It was noted that Old Orchard Elementary School seems to show an increase in vandalism activity during breaks. (The problem is that there is no fence around the school). The school has had their computers stolen.
- Ongoing traffic issues around the schools can be problematic. Residents were advised to contact the Traffic Department at the Sheriff's main number and give them the times of days & locations of the problems and they can send motorcycles to cite vehicles.
- For the record, Valencia 's crime rate went down 13% this year over last year. - stats are available on the website.
- Also worth noting, none of the programs (i.e. Cobra, CIP, etc.) are anticipated to be cut, and they have been helping immensely.
- Peachland apartments are rumored to have lots of gangsters living there.
- There is a lot of alcoholic beverage consumption at the park. It is illegal for you to drink alcohol at the park, so you can call the Sheriff's if you observe this behavior.
- A resident shared that if you have an electronic garage door opener, after you close your door, you should hit the "lock" button and it will scramble your code to keep thieves from being able to retrieve your code. Also, make sure your garage door closes all the way before you step inside your home.
- Don't keep your tax papers in a box clearly marked, "TAX PAPERS" on the floor of your garage. This is an invitation to thieves passing by.
- Vacation Check – There is a form on the Sheriff's website http://www.scvsheriff.com/form_vacation_request.asp that you can fill out to have your home checked while you're away. It's a good idea to tell a trusted neighbor you'll be away so they can keep an extra set of eyes on your home. They can take in the mail or newspapers in the event that these items show up even if you tried to cancel them.

MAIL

- Mail – do not put any outgoing mail in your personal postal box.
- It is recommended that you have a LOCKING box for your mailbox.
- Outgoing mail should be mailed from the post office.

Santa Clarita Valley Public Safety
Presentation by owner, Daniel Rodriguez and Brad Brown
Surveillance Cameras & Access Control Presentation

SCVPS is locally owned and operated. They have been in business for 5 years and they provide service 24/7 to Valencia Hills , Vista Ridge, Fairways, and more.

When calling SCVPS:

- Please provide as much information (details / descriptions) as possible when calling in reports.
- Please do not exaggerate your reports (i.e. if there are 2 guys knocking on your door, do not say there are 10 burly men beating down your door).
- HOA streets are not private streets, so security companies are limited in enforcement.
- SCVPS gets between 50-100 calls per month on solicitation.
- The next highest amount of calls is regarding barking dogs. They provided copies of a packet of information from animal control with a very aggressive approach to solving this problem. You should first try to work it out with the homeowner, but in cases of desperation, this is an alternative way of dealing with the problem.
- Be prepared to give SCVPS your name, address and telephone number. This information is necessary so they can verify that you are indeed a member of a particular HOA, and so they can follow-up with you after the incident to let you know the outcome.
- Timeliness of your call is important. If something happened yesterday and you don't report it until tomorrow, it doesn't do much good to anyone.
- Typical response time is between 4-15 minutes.
- If you would like a follow-up callback, be sure to specify if you don't want any calls past a certain time, otherwise, you might get a call at 3am.
- All information you provide to SCVPS is strictly confidential.
- If there is a call for service about a loud party or barking dog, SCVPS will issue a document citing the resident and a copy of this

citation will be issued to the corresponding HOA so there will be a running record of violations.

- If SCVPS ends up calling the Sheriff's Department, they will bring the Sheriff's Department up to speed on what the incident is, as well as letting you know that the matter was turned over to the Sheriff's.
- Anything of a CRIMINAL nature or crime in process should be reported to 9-1-1 (if life threatening) or to the Sheriff's Department (255-1121).
- They confront all solicitors. They will drive by and say "hello" so they know someone is watching. They ask every solicitor to show their permit. 99% do not have a permit from the city or county. All officers have copies of the legit permits in their vehicles. Temporary copies, too.
- Surveillance Cameras support the collaborative efforts of security departments. If positioned at the entry/exit points of the HOA, they can provide valuable images of people, license plates, vehicle descriptions when crimes take place.
- It was noted that some HOA's are concerned about using cameras because of potential liability (people assume they are safe because there are cameras, and the HOA doesn't want to be sued for this false assumption). The law states that when it comes to security cameras there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, however, you don't have that in public places. Security cameras are an excellent tool and a very strong deterrent. Video records can actually protect HOA's and liabilities by capturing images that can be used for prosecution.
- Perimeterlogics can provide a 30' bus with all their equipment to prospective Board representatives. (contact 310-464-6336)

20 Questions from Residents / Answers from Sheriff's Department

The following questions were submitted to our Neighborhood Watch program from the residents of 001, 002, Vista Hills, Vista Ridge and Valencia Hills . The answers are from the Sheriff's Department, taken directly from the handout:

1. What is the protocol for handling neighbors with barking dogs late at night?

We suggest you contact the neighbor and try to work out the issue, if that doesn't work you can contact the District Attorney's Office.

2. It appears like there is more gang activity in the Santa Clarita/Newhall area, is this true and if so, how much of a threat are these individuals to our community?

With the growing population comes more crime, including gangs. You must continue to be diligent in your personal safety which we will discuss tonight.

3. There have been a couple of attempted abductions against teenage girls near Placerita Junior High School this year, what is the Sheriff's Department doing to protect our kids and this community?

The Sheriff's Department has made 2 arrests for these attempted abductions. For the most up to date crime statistics, please log onto www.scvsheriff.com

4. Where can we find reputable Alarm Companies? (I don't want to call some randomly as that will alert them that we do NOT have an alarm!!)

We cannot recommend businesses. Do your homework, deal with reputable companies. See if they are listed with the Better Business Bureau.

5. My mailbox is on the street. Would it be more secure from identity thieves on my doorstep?

Before you move your mailbox, you might want to check with the post office to see if that is an option. We suggest you take all outgoing mail to the post office directly and for incoming mail, a locking mailbox is also suggested. Try to collect incoming mail as soon as possible.

6. Due the current economic climate, what effect has this had on the SCV Sheriff's Dept.'s crime prevention programs, i.e. Gang Deterrence.

All the current programs are still in effect.

7. Why can't our association and our neighbors get a detailed monthly police log of the occurrences in the area?

Actually you can. Go to the website www.scvsheriff.com and you can search an area by address.

8. How can we serve the SCV Sheriff's Department better?

If you see something, say something. You are our best defense against criminal activity. You can be our eyes and ears when we are not there. Call us with any suspicious activity. Work together with your neighbors.

9. Would it be possible to install security cameras at the entrances of Via Macarena, Via Capella, and along Tournament? We do not have gates, so this might be the best solution. Of course, these cameras would be linked directly to the stations feed. Where could we obtain pricing on security like this?

That is city property, you will need to contact the city of Santa Clarita .

10. When do they expect Wiley Canyon Road (Via Princessa) to be extended to Canyon Country?

Contact the City of Santa Clarita .

11. Who I should call about vehicles parked on the street with expired tags and/or extended time parking, stored on streets.

On our website www.scvsheriff.com you can report any vehicles through our traffic enforcement.

12. What's the best way to address vagrants & people "crashed" in the park?

Contact the station at 255-1121 and they will send a Deputy to the location

13. What can we do when people are hanging out in the Paseos drinking, smoking dope or seen making drug deals?

Contact the station at 255-1121 and they will send a Deputy out to the location. Try to include as much information as you can. Physical descriptions and a call back number for you, in case we have any questions.

14. What specific things I can do to make my home less of a target for burglary? What are the most effective ways to keep our homes secure with all the crime in the area (window locks? House alarms?, etc.). What tools are most effective?

Discussed tonight.

15. In an emergency such as an earthquake does our community have any sort of plan of action?

Contact the City of Santa Clarita about their CERT program. You can train to be a certified emergency responder in your neighborhood.

16. Is there a "Safe House" program in effect in our community? How can we make children or those in need of a safe contact house aware of approved

houses -- and how to make those offering such help assured that those seeking help are legitimate?

There are currently no organized Safe House programs. However, as an active Neighborhood Watch group you can organize your own safe house program and teach your children when and where they can go if they need help. Be sure to include the option of calling 9-1-1 on a cell phone.

17. I would like to address the issue dealing with the vandalism of Old Orchard school and the loitering issues during school hours. There have been talks about erecting a fence or installing surveillance cameras/ security guards. What is the latest word?

This would be up to the school. I would contact the school directly.

18. What is the quickest way to get someone over to investigate possible drug-dealing at the end of Oak Vale by the stairs? Many times, cars come and 'wait', meet up with another vehicle/person, they talk and then they are out of there within a few minutes. It's not enough time for security company or Sheriffs to arrive. Can we consider the installation of security cameras at strategic or problematic areas where we see this kind of activity in Valencia Hills ?

There have been no calls to this area in the last 3 months. I would suggest homeowners call when they see suspicious activity.

19. The traffic coming down Tournament Rd (from Wiley, moving north), are an issue; they speed and I have witnessed several near 'head ons' when residents are making a right turn on Oak Vale and the car behind them attempts to go around them, only to encounter a head on car who's waiting in the south facing position to make a left on to Oak Vale. Also, cars are moving very fast down hill on Tournament, making it difficult and nearly impossible to turn left onto Tournament from Oak Vale Drive in a timely manner. How can we add speed bumps to slow down the speeders along a certain stretch of Tournament Rd ???

Speed bumps are an issue with the City of Santa Clarita . You can log onto our website at www.scvsheriff.com and list the problem with Traffic Enforcement.

20. I live on the tail end of Oak Vale Drive and very often we have people, not familiar with the neighborhood, fly down Oak Vale and then realize that the street ends there--then they often do a fast, angry U-turn in Oak Vale and speed out. This is dangerous since this cul de sac has 7 children who often play outside. Can there be a sign placed on paseo side between Cielo & (tail end of) Oak Vale Drive , saying 'Road Ends' ? There is a sign near Tournament that says "no outlet", but no one ever sees this sign.

The City of Santa Clarita may be able to help you with changing the sign to a more visible area.

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