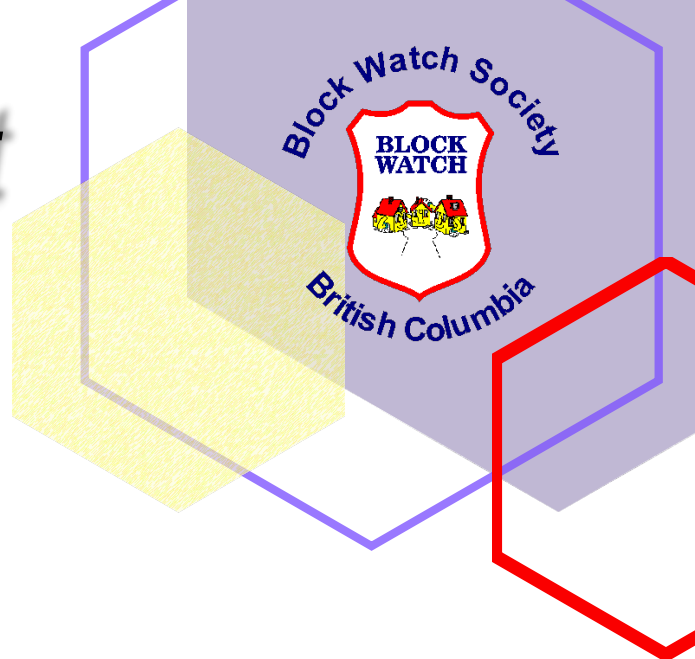


Block Watch Beat

Winter 2019

A Newsletter for B.C. Block Watch Groups



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Pedestrian Safety

By Christine Kirby, ICBC

As the weather changes and daylight hours decrease, pedestrians become more vulnerable.

Tips for Safe Walking

- Be careful at intersections. Watch for drivers turning left or right through the crosswalk. Drivers may be focused on oncoming traffic and not see you.
- Don't jaywalk – always use crosswalks and follow the pedestrian signs and traffic signals.
- Make eye contact with drivers, as it's hard to see pedestrians when visibility is poor in fall and winter. Never assume that a driver has seen you.

- Remove your headphones and take a break from your phone while crossing the road.
- Be as reflective as possible to make it easier for drivers to see you in wet weather, at dusk and at night.

Tips for Drivers

- Focus on the road. Always leave your phone alone while driving.
- Be ready to yield to pedestrians, especially when turning at intersections and near transit stops.
- Remember, if a vehicle is stopped in front of you or in the lane next to you, they may be yielding for a pedestrian.

Batter Up!

The backbone for any Block Watch Team has always been the countless number of men and women who volunteer their time to take on the roles of Captain and Co-captain. The benefits of their efforts create the most effective community-based crime prevention program in existence!

When the time comes for a Captain or Co-captain to step down, are you willing to 'step up to the plate' and take your turn? Do you have all the facts to make your decision? How much time and work is involved in taking on these roles? Maybe not as much as you may think!

Captain Responsibilities

- **Recruiting neighbours** to join your team; maintain an updated list
- Maintain a **communication chain** (be sure to respect everyone's privacy)
- Forward **Crime Stats** if available

By Cst. Romi Mattu, Vancouver Police Department

- Share information you receive from Block Watch members regarding **suspicious activity**
- Encourage your team to use **crime prevention strategies** and to **report all crimes** to police
- Plan a **yearly social event** to continue to build relationships in your neighbourhood (eg. a summer potluck).

It is important to remember, once a team is established, the Captain / Co-captain role is more focused on information sharing.

Investing some time and energy into the health of your own community can be a very rewarding experience and should be a shared responsibility. A heavy load is made lighter with the help of many hands to carry it.



New Partnership in an Old Way of Doing Business

By Mike Moyer
Regional District North Okanagan

I was recently voted in as one of your new BC Block Watch Directors, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself, and let you know that I am honoured and happy to provide guidance, feedback and assistance where required.

I currently work at the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) as the Safe Communities Coordinator and 2nd Bylaw Officer. Established in 1965, the RDNO is one of 28 regional districts in the province of British Columbia. The RDNO provides over 70 services, such as building inspection, emergency management, and solid waste management to more than 87,000 North Okanagan residents. Within its boundaries are five electoral areas. These unincorporated rural areas are where I offer Block Watch training to residents. I operate approximately 30 Block Watch groups throughout the RDNO.

Before working at the RDNO, I was an RCMP officer with 19+ years' service in seven different posting locations in BC. My service varied in roles with Crime Prevention, uniformed policing, Covert Operations, administration and Aboriginal Policing. Through this experience, I have seen firsthand how effective Block Watch can be.

Since its inception, the Block Watch Program of BC has been influential in reducing residential crime and promoting increased feelings of neighbourhood security. The program empowers people to provide additional "eyes and ears" for the Police as neighbours form a network to report suspicious activity.

Rural BC

Historically, the Block Watch Program has operated well in urban settings where neighbourhood groups organize to identify and record suspicious vehicles and human activity. It may not come to mind immediately, but rural crime is different than urban crime. Opportunities for criminal activity are largely based on a lack of density. When a community all knows one another, they are more likely to leave their doors unlocked, and with no neighbours for miles, there are fewer people that can see their neighbour's car being stolen or house broken into. While rural areas have less crime than their urban counterparts, criminal behaviour is on the rise, so by joining Block Watch, tight-knit communities are empowered to be more aware of what happens a few miles down the road.

FireSmart

Recently, the RDNO saw an opportunity to expand the scope of the program. Just like how rural crime looks different, rural residents also have to worry about the



impacts of wildfire. Because of this, the program now offers crime prevention education, Fire Smart Canada training and information from BC Emergency Services. The existing Block Watch communication logistics lend well to the overarching community and public safety strategies within the FireSmart program.

Through BC FireSmart and BC Emergency Services campaigns, similar messaging empowers residents to take simple steps to prepare for and respond to potential emergencies, including natural disasters. For example, recently, when presenting to a group of citizens, I included a FireSmart presentation along with my introduction to the Block Watch program. In the FireSmart program, we educate individuals to do three key things: look at flammable material on or close to your house, trim existing trees up to 10', and be informed about the different types of emergencies that could occur and their appropriate responses. All residents were educated on the necessary survival supplies to keep on hand for at least 72 hours if an emergency occurs. Now, when neighbours are keeping an eye out for suspicious activity, they are also trained to look for fire hazards at neighbouring properties.

We believe this multipronged approach helps to bring more people together to learn how to keep their family, house and property safe from crime and natural disasters.



Reference: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/firesmart>

Snowbirds Need to Safeguard their Homes

By Roy Morgan
Regional District Central
Okanagan



With the winter season upon us many people will be travelling and planning sunny vacations to the south.

It is important to take a few moments to think about crime prevention for your home and property before you go.

Do not announce your trip/vacation plans on social media. Advertising your absence could be an invitation to would-be thieves.

Ask trusted neighbours to keep an eye on your residence while you are away and leave your vacation address and phone numbers with them so you can be reached in an emergency.

Ask that neighbour to maintain your home so it appears occupied, including shovelling the driveway, picking up the mail, flyers, newspapers and parking their vehicle in your driveway.

Make sure all your locks on windows and doors function properly and use them and consider using timers for lights around your home.

Leave the shades and blinds on doors and windows in a position that you normally would have them.

Make sure smoke and burglary alarms are functioning properly and armed. Consider taking valuables to a safety deposit box.

Your vacation should be an enjoyable, relaxing experience. Following these safety tips will reduce the chance of being victimized and allow you to return home to a safe and secure residence.

How to Prevent Theft of Catalytic Converters

The lower mainland is again seeing incidents of catalytic converter theft. A catalytic converter is an important component of your car as it controls harmful emissions from the engine before they exit the exhaust pipe.

You may not be able to tell your catalytic converter was stolen by looking at your car, but you will know as soon as you start the engine. When the catalytic converter has been removed, your vehicle will make a loud roaring sound that will get louder as you push the gas pedal and possible leakage of fumes into the cabin of the vehicle.

Thieves are targeting shopping malls, school parking lots, busy business districts and they are hitting these places in the daylight with any standard metal cutting tool.

Welded Bolts & Spray Paint

Have the catalytic converter welded to your car's frame, which may make it harder and could increase the time it takes to steal. Spray paint your converter with brightly-colored, high-temperature paint. Many recycling yards refuse to buy marked parts from individuals. It's under your vehicle, it should not affect your exterior appearance.

Seek an Automotive Professional

Talk to an automotive professional about installing a catalytic converter lock or alarm on your vehicle. Protective coverings for your catalytic converter such as the device known as the "Catclamp," can deter thieves

as well. The Catclamp makes it more difficult for the reciprocal saw wielding thief to steal.

Visible Parking & Video Surveillance

Park in a well-lit, busy area and close to building entrances. Install video cameras to monitor for any theft from your vehicle including your catalytic converter.

Car Alarm & Move your Car Frequently

Calibrate your car's alarm to set off when it detects vibration. Catalytic converter thieves are tempted by cars that sit in the same spot for a long time. If your car has been left in a public place like an airport parking lot or a parking garage for an extended period of time, you are at greater risk for catalytic converter theft.

Report & Inform Neighbourhood

Report suspicious persons in parking lots or near vehicles wherever you park at home, work, etc. After reporting to police, keep your neighbourhood informed by talking with your neighbors and/or posting flyers. You can help your whole community be more informed and on the lookout.

Links for reference:

<https://www.surreynowleader.com/news/arrests-prompt-delta-police-warning-about-catalytic-converter-thefts/>
<https://globalnews.ca/news/5093718/ottawa-police-warn-public-after-several-thefts-of-catalytic-converters/>

SECURED

- BUT TARGET RICH -



By Kimberly Kelley, Victoria PD

Secured Parking Areas

At first, they seem full of promise to make our lives simpler, easier and safer. The heavy bars of a locking, automated gate at a multi-unit residential building's secured parking area create a sense of safety and security that promise to keep out thieves. Yet, many building residents have found that these same features have made their building a target for thieves.

Theft from vehicles has been a major property crime problem throughout BC this year. Thieves target vehicles where valuables are commonly left inside. While officers are making arrests and Block Watch volunteers have been essential in calling in thieves trying door handles of vehicles on the street and other suspicious circumstances, secured parking areas remain a prime target

for thefts from vehicles. Often, it's the very security of the space that lulls us into neglecting the single most effective measure we can take to avoid being a victim of a theft from our vehicle; removing our valuables.

Thief on the Inside

Thieves often gain access to secured parking areas by following a vehicle into the secured parking area while staying out of sight of the driver. They then hide in the parking area until empty. Once alone, the same things that make the area feel safe to us, leave the thief free to steal valuables left behind in vehicles at their leisure. When thefts from vehicles in secured parking areas are reported, officers often discover multiple vehicles have been broken into. Commonly, thieves who gain access to secured parking areas also target storage areas.

9 p.m. Routine

The B.C. Integrated Municipal Provincial Auto Crime Team (IMPACT)'s "9 p.m. routine" is a simple, powerful tool to protect yourself from falling victim to these thieves. It's proven effective in protecting vehicles on the street.

The 9 p.m. routine is straightforward – you remove valuables left behind in your vehicle by 9 p.m. as many thieves target vehicles parked in residential areas after dark.

By removing all valuables from your vehicle at 9 p.m. each night, you can keep yourself and your neighbours from falling victim to thieves prowling your secured parking area. Thieves who gain access to a secured parking area will leave without damaging a single vehicle if they are unable to find vehicles with valuables inside. Sharing the 9p.m. routine with your Block, your neighbours and your friends can help make your secured parking area truly secure by making it undesirable for thieves who are looking to turn the elements of safety and security against you.

For more information on IMPACT's work and the 9 p.m. routine, please visit <https://www.baitcar.com/9pm-routine>.



Winter Neighbours

What does community look like over winter? Successful Block Watch neighbours find ways of connecting throughout the season in which people are more inclined to hibernate indoors. Here are a few ideas to stay involved:

- Split up duties around the common roads and pathways. For example:
 - clearing storm drains of leafy debris,
 - pruning and gardening before the winter freeze sets in,
 - tree limbing by neighbours with the skills and equipment,
 - shoveling and/or salting walkways and driveways for others, especially those less able to do the heavy lifting.
- The onset of winter is also a great time to make an inventory of

By Gabriel Pelletier,
Surrey RCMP

darkness and light around properties and roadways

- Speaking of inventory, neighbours can connect on emergency preparedness
- Organize a social gathering,
- Check up on vulnerable neighbours
- And of course, share this Block Watch Newsletter!

Let us know how you pass the season with your neighbours!



E-Transfer: What you need to know

Your bank is your most important partner if you become the victim of a financial crime. However, financial institutions are also in competition with one another to provide new services to you, their customer. E-transfer is great example of such a cutting-edge service. It's simple and incredibly useful, but after a string of news reports on scams targeting e-transfer customers, you have to wonder if banks put convenience over security.

What is e-transfer?

E-transfer, as the name suggests, is a method of sending money from one bank client to the client of any other bank using the recipient's email plus a question and answer known to both. This method of money transfer started with small transactions for small ticket services or between friends and family in a world where less actual cash is carried on one's person. It is a method used more than one million times a day in Canada. Given the popularity

of the service, it isn't going away any time soon, so we as users must treat it just like any other tool in order to minimize risk.

Do not be complacent

The inherent weakness of e-transfer is that clients use it in the spirit of the casual service it started out as. But when it is used to pay contractors, and more frequently for hundreds and even thousands of dollars, e-transfer becomes a bigger target for sophisticated scammers. Don't brush off the seriousness of your financial institution's terms of service. Thieves can hack into your email, so never send your password in this way.

Passwords are king

The easiest way to protect yourself from e-transfer thieves is by choosing a proper password. Instead of sending your answer through email or entering a question that half the planet can guess, like, "Who is my favourite Beatle?" try sending a verification code by text.

By Gabriel Pelletier, Surrey RCMP

Two factor authentication

When you prompt the recipient in two different ways, this is called Two Factor Authentication. For example, type in, "Text for the answer when you get this email." The recipient will make the request via text message or will call the sender, at which point, the password can be relayed. This cuts down significantly on a hacker's ability to redirect the funds into a different bank account.

It's really not that difficult to make this a common practice for your e-transfers. If you don't think you can hack it, we recommend sticking to cold, hard currency transfers.

Reference:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/rbc-customer-out-of-pocket-after-e-transfer-fraud-1.5128114>

Notes from the President

Block Watch is a brand that creates crime prevention groups involved in community safety throughout British Columbia.

April 8th, 2019 marked the 26th year our Block Watch Society members have had a mandate to bring crime prevention and community safety education to our municipalities and communities. As crime knows no boundaries, our goal is still to see this Program in every community in British Columbia.

We held our 2nd annual Block Watch Symposium and AGM on October 2nd. It was well attended and contained a terrific line up of speakers on topics that were prevalent to our roles as Coordinators delivering the Program. We had opening remarks from the Ministry, the Deputy Chief Constable commanding the Operations Division for the Vancouver Police Department, and the RCMP.

It was clear that not only is this program vital for activating the residents of our province to be part of the solution to crime, but plays an important role in the evolution of a centralized operational crime



By Regan Borisenko,
City of Vernon

prevention program that our government and police agencies alike can utilize more and more to combat crime in our province.

The symposium speakers shared a number of helpful tips to participants that we hope to share in upcoming newsletter highlights or through quick email tip blasts.

We have been very fortunate to have a working board that rivals any in the province. Our board members have given so much of their time already and the fact that they have chosen to continue to be part of making this Society even better is a testament to all the members we have.

I also want to acknowledge our very hardworking contract staff: Kathie Swift – Office Manager, Celine (Lee) Gee – Accounting, and new this year is Erle Williams – Web Master. Trust me when I say we couldn't do this without them!!!

Finally, please consider joining this team and become part of our Block Watch Society history.



Our Board consists of...

POLICE AGENCY DIRECTORS:

Regan Borisenko – City of Vernon
Dawn Dickinson – Burnaby RCMP
Kimberly Kelley – Victoria PD
Romi Mattu – Vancouver PD
Roy Morgan – Regional District of Central Okanagan
Mike Moyer – Regional District of North Okanagan
Gabriel Pelletier – Surrey RCMP

CORPORATE & ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS:

Jane Hanson – E Division RCMP
Christine Kirby – ICBC

BLOCK WATCH SOCIETY OF BC

891 Mt. Bulman Plc.
Vernon, BC V1B 2Z4

Phone: Toll Free 1-877-602-3358
E-Mail: blockwatch@blockwatch.com

Visit us on the Web!

www.blockwatch.com

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We acknowledge the support of the Province of British Columbia.