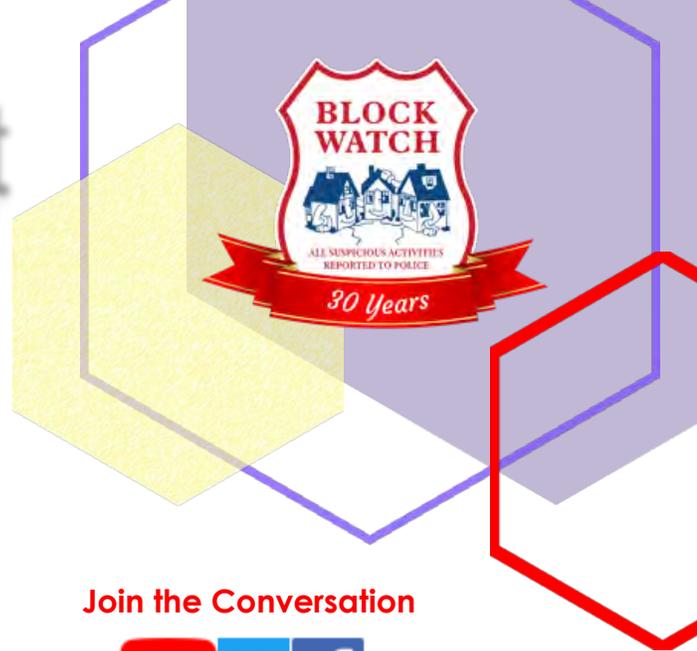


# Block Watch Beat

Spring/Summer 2021

A Newsletter for Block Watch Community Safety



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Join the Conversation



## Block Watch Experience in Encino, CA

Cindy Andresen, Block Watch Captain, now living in Delta, BC, special to the Block Watch Beat

Our motto was “*Changing How We Neighbour to Deter Crime & Build Community.*”

Sounds easy, right?

### MOVING TO A SAFE PLACE

Nestled just outside of Los Angeles, County, in the San Fernando Valley is a great little city called Encino where many call home. You might even recognize it as the setting of the popular 80’s movie, “Fast Times at Ridgemont High.”

Encino was heralded as “a great place to raise a family,” “so close to the city & the ocean,” “great schools,” “safe,” and so on. So, we decided to investigate further.



Photo by Paul Hanaoka

Several months later, we settled in our new home, and were quite happy. What’s not to love? It’s 80°F and sunny all the time!

We learned that there was a small Facebook page created for just the few streets surrounding us – approximately 40 households. We thought, cool, we can really be connected. And we were. Everyone looked out for each other, posted positive notes, comments to others, garage sales, suspicious activity, social gatherings. It felt like a tight little community.

### AN EASY TARGET

As years passed, and times got tough for some, we saw an uptick in petty crime: car break-ins, stolen mail, small

personal items taken from properties. The word got out quickly that Encino was an easy target.

We then began seeing signs of next level activity, homelessness, serious crimes, dangerous confrontations. More frequently, helicopters would shine searchlights in backyards looking for suspects. More and more cars with no license plates would drive by homes in the early hours of the morning to stop and check doors, or scale walls into backyards. Really scary actually.

## THE BLOCK WATCH STRATEGY

The Facebook community got together and decided to create more of an official Block Watch. We engaged with our local police and crafted a plan to:

- 1) create awareness,
- 2) find support with the authorities,
- 3) let criminals know that they were being watched by the community,
- 4) report all suspicious activity to the police.

We knew that the police alone could not take this on. It would take the active participation of the community.

Neighbourhoods were identified by area. Along with Block Watch Captains, and Co-Captains, each area had a designated SLO (Senior Lead Officer). This SLO was an active participant on the Facebook pages as a direct set of eyes as to what the residents and Block Watch Captains were posting. They would call out any activity that looked suspicious or out of the ordinary. Anything from a parked car, a solicitor and door knocking raised concerns about stolen packages, break-ins, and potential casings.

Many of the neighbours caught all the activity on their security cameras. Videos were uploaded and shared daily. Community communication resulted in catching suspects early on, sending a message that THIS community is connected and engaged. Thieves do not want to be caught, so they moved on to the next neighbourhood.

## SUCCESS!!

In a few months time, we built up our community with well over 5000 participants. We saw significant success in the blocks that were organized and trained to observe and report. We saw the value in having more eyes on the street, awareness of activity on the block, and immediate communication via group texting to share urgent messages. Blocks noticed a decrease in crime and faster response times when they worked together.

As we worked hard connecting people through the Block Watch program, Encino returned to being a very desirable community to live in. We hosted annual block parties and since everyone looked forward to meeting friends, old and new, it got better each year. We may have set up Block Watch as a response to crime, but communication and gatherings are what kept us connected.

The sense of connection between individuals, families, and neighbourhoods is at the heart of this vision of a "connected" community.

Looking back, there was more than just a select few people on a cute neighbourhood Facebook page who really cared about the city we called home. There was all of the San Fernando Valley and beyond. We listened to our community's concerns and took action to address our challenges. By learning from others' experiences and observations, we lowered overall crime and kept Encino a great place to live, work and raise a family – one person at a time.

I am confident in saying that together, we built a city where everyone was aware, safe and engaged.



# Crime Stoppers' 9 at 9 Crime Prevention Strategy

Linda Annis, Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers

As the winter weather comes to an end, we can't wait to start leaving doors and windows open again. Gardening and other activities mean getting outside in the yard, with many of us leaving our doors unlocked and garages open.

That can spell trouble. Some of us can be too lax when we stay home, thinking everything's safe just because we're nearby. Don't let your guard down. You should think about whether a crook could sneak into the front door while you're busy in the back.

## WE CALL IT "9 at 9"

Prevention is one of the best ways to stop crime in its tracks. We should all remember to do a quick, basic security check around the house every night of the year, whether it's light out or dark. Police recommend everyone do a check around the home about 9:00 P.M. every night.

### Think "9 at 9" – Nine things you can do at 9 PM:

1. Remove everything from inside your car – from valuables and garage door openers, to pop bottles and pocket change.
2. Roll up the windows tight and lock all the doors.
3. Lock up bikes, ladders and even garden equipment.
4. Make sure all garage doors are closed and locked, including the one inside that leads into your home.
5. Close and lock all doors and windows in your home.
6. Set the alarm and check your video security equipment.
7. Leave an exterior light on overnight, so your front door isn't hidden in darkness.
8. Make sure deliveries from online orders have been picked up from your front step.
9. Don't let newspapers and flyers pile up – it looks like no one's home.

When you see something suspicious in your neighbourhood, say something. Keeping your family and your neighbourhood safe involves everyone in the community reporting activities that aren't right. Always be aware of what is happening in your neighbourhood. When you see something suspicious, please call the police. But if you feel more comfortable anonymously reporting your information, that's when you can call Crime Stoppers.

## ABOUT METRO VANCOUVER CRIME STOPPERS

We are a non-profit society and registered charity that offers rewards for anonymous tip information about criminal activity and provides it to investigators in the Lower Mainland from Powell River to Boston Bar. People can leave anonymous tips in a variety of ways including sending the information through Crime Stoppers' "P3" smartphone crime reporting app, calling Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477, online at [solvecrime.ca](http://solvecrime.ca), or by following the link on the Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers Facebook page. Crime Stoppers accepts tips in 115 different languages. If the information provided results in a charge or an arrest, a cash reward of up to \$5000 may be offered. Tipsters stay anonymous by using code numbers to collect their rewards. Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers is not the police and operates solely on funds donated or generated through fundraising events. Tax-deductible donations are gratefully received anytime by accessing the "donate" link at [solvecrime.ca](http://solvecrime.ca).

## "RETURN-IT" TO US!

Should you wish to donate the proceeds of your bottle recycling to support Crime Stoppers, we've made it easy. Please visit Encorp's Return-It Program at [return-it.ca/express](http://return-it.ca/express) and enter our registered phone number **604-717-2585** when you print your sticker tags at any Express kiosk or from home. Every donation is appreciated!





Photo by Tom Barrett

## (COMMON SENSE) Personal Safety

Mike Moyer  
Regional District of  
North Okanagan

With recent media articles around personal safety, I wanted to share a few simple precautions. You can reduce the risk to yourself and discourage those who commit crimes.

### Personal Safety

- Be alert and aware of the people around you; be mindful of persons loitering or acting suspiciously.
- Educate yourself concerning prevention tactics.
- Take a self-defense course.
- Be aware of your location and situation, such as alleys and dark parking lots.
- Inform others when and where you are going and check in with them when you reach your destination.
- Have your keys ready upon approaching your parked vehicle.
- If you suspect you are being followed, go to the nearest well-lit place or populated area, and yell, if necessary, to attract attention.
- When taking public transit alone, avoid waiting or getting off at isolated stations/stops. Arrange for a family member or friend to escort you to and from the station.
- Do not hitch-hike or pick up hitch-hikers. Once trapped inside the vehicle, it is difficult to escape or call for assistance.

### Street Precautions

- Be alert to your surroundings—especially if you are alone or out after dark.
- Whenever possible, travel with a friend(s).
- Stay in well-lighted areas.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid objects, bushes and doorways where someone could hide.
- Walk confidently at a steady pace with purpose.
- Make eye contact with people when walking towards them.
- Do not respond to conversation from strangers on the street—keep walking.
- If you carry a purse, carry it securely between your arm and your body.
- Do not use or wear anything that will limit your vision or hearing.
- Depending on your circumstances, making a phone call or starting a video may help you avoid a confrontation.

### In Public

- Always keep your personal information secure.
- Do not display large amounts of money in public.
- Be aware of scams in case a stranger approaches you under pretenses. Avoid giving your name, address, and place of employment.

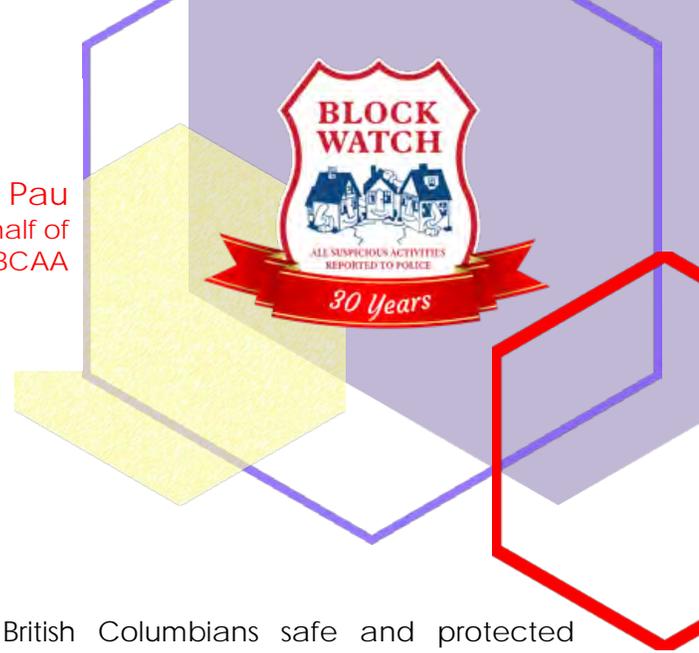
# BCAA and Block Watch Work Together to Expand Community Safety in BC

As British Columbians stay local and spend more time at home, keeping you, your family and your neighbours safe in your communities is top of mind.

Serving one in three BC households with industry-leading home, car, life, health & dental and travel insurance, roadside assistance, and full auto repair at BCAA's Auto Service Centres, protection is at the heart of BCAA's business. With our Members' support, we're also committed to delivering programs and initiatives aimed at keeping everyone safe across the province.

BCAA and the Block Watch Society of BC have partnered to increase community safety through the power of our respective memberships. Our shared goals around building safer neighbourhoods, disaster preparedness and prevention, and engaging our communities to

Victoria Pau  
On behalf of  
BCAA



keep British Columbians safe and protected makes this alliance a great opportunity for our province.

BCAA is thrilled to collaborate with Block Watch! Stay tuned for upcoming initiatives and benefits!



## 5 Ways to Spot Energy Theft

Weldon LeBlanc  
BC Crime Stoppers

Theft of electricity and natural gas happens in communities across BC. This criminal activity poses major safety concerns for utility employees and the public. Plus, the cost of stealing electricity and natural gas is paid for by all customers.

BC Crime Stoppers shares anonymous information related to energy theft directly with FortisBC and BC Hydro investigators to better identify and investigate possible instances of energy theft. This helps protect our neighbourhoods and gives investigators access to timely information.

Energy theft generally involves finding ways to consume energy while bypassing a meter so that it can't be accurately measured, recorded, or paid for.

### How to spot energy theft in your neighbourhood:

- 1) Meter missing? Metal tag on the meter broken?
- 2) Wires cut/sticking out? Tools jammed in the meter?
- 3) Not a BC Hydro/FortisBC employee working on the meter?
- 4) Wires cut or hanging off the power line itself?
- 5) Lots of extension cords across a property for weeks at a time?

If you suspect energy theft, call Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS or leave a secure tip online at [canadiancrimestoppers.org/tips](http://canadiancrimestoppers.org/tips).

# EXPLAINER: Credit Checks

Leah Marlay & Mitchell Paquette, VPD

**Did you know...** By law, everyone is entitled to one *FREE* credit check per year. Applying for a [credit report](#) is an important crime prevention action that each of us can take to help protect ourselves from identity theft and unwarranted credit hassles.

There are two Canadian credit bureaus, TransUnion and Equifax. Check your credit history with both agencies. There could be something present on one agency's report that is not present on the other. For some, you may want to step it up a notch and subscribe to a 'for fee' credit monitoring service. Be careful on the websites to look for the FREE options. See the links below for shortcuts.

When applying for your credit check, you have the option to provide your Social Insurance Number (SIN) to increase the accuracy of the search. Always be aware that you should [protect your SIN](#) and balance the benefits and cautions of providing it.

If you find anything on your report that doesn't seem right, deal with it immediately as you may have been the victim of some form of identity theft. Be aware that, it may not be glaringly obvious that this has happened. Both [Equifax](#) and [TransUnion](#) provide resources to help identify a fraud or theft

and how to deal with being a victim of identity theft. The [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) also has resources to help you deal with the aftermath.

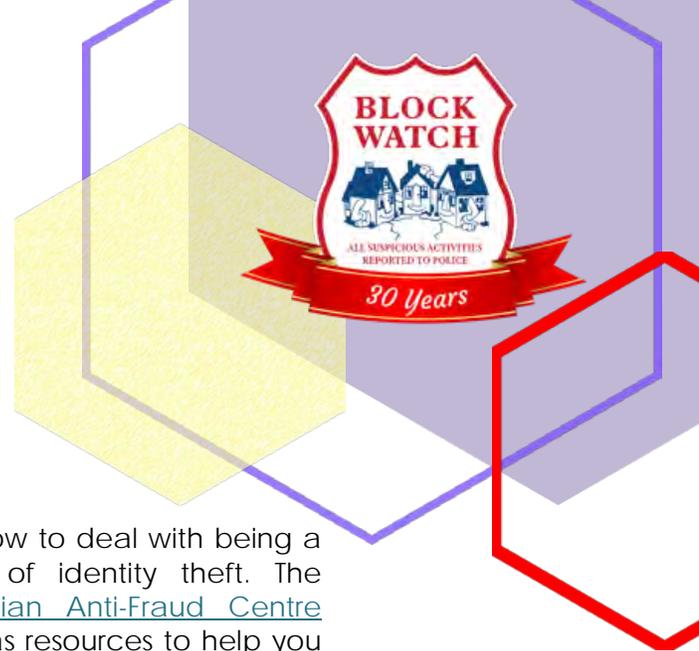
## APPLY FOR YOUR FREE CREDIT CHECK

If you do an annual check, consider requesting your report from one bureau, then wait six months before you order from the other bureau. By spacing out your requests, you may be able to detect problems sooner.

Both TransUnion and Equifax offer a variety of ways to check your credit history for free.

The process of checking your credit will take less than 15 minutes. Don't forget to put a repeat reminder in your calendar.

At the very least, this process is interesting to see what information is collected about you. We hope you don't find any surprises.



## DIRECT LINKS TO REQUEST YOUR CREDIT REPORT / CONSUMER DISCLOSURE



[Link to TransUnion Canada Free Consumer Disclosure Choices](#)

There are four options on this page: Online, Mail, In Person & By Phone. The Online version allows you to request a Consumer Disclosure for **free every 30 days**. The Consumer Disclosure does not provide you your credit score.

TransUnion by Mail: [TransUnion](#)



[Link to Equifax Canada Credit Check](#)

Scroll down to near the bottom of the page under "Stay on top of your credit with Equifax" and then select the free online or mail option.

Equifax by Mail: [Equifax](#)

## Tips on Preventing Theft from Your Garage

What is the first place that comes to mind when you think about storage of your tools and equipment at home? Most of you will answer "Garage." Many of you have also spent beautiful weekend afternoons organizing your garage while members of the community take walks through your area. It is important to recognize that offenders may take these opportunities to blend in and "scope out" what you have in your garage, and then think about how to get their hands on it.

So, how can you enhance security on your property to mitigate the chances of garage break-in's? Here are some quick tips:

- 1. Close your garage door(s).** An open overhead garage door is an open invitation to offenders.
- 2. Ensure there is adequate lighting** in dark areas. Offenders generally like to operate in the dark where they won't be seen. When you illuminate your driveway and the area around your garage you can help reduce the chances of a break-in to your garage.

## Impaired Driving

Although COVID-19 has changed a lot of things, the law remains the same - if you've been drinking, don't drive.

ICBC and police across the province are encouraging drivers to be responsible, and police will be looking for impaired drivers at CounterAttack road-checks.

Impaired driving is the leading criminal cause of death in Canada and one of the top three contributing factors of fatal crashes in B.C.

ICBC continues to work to reduce impaired driving by supporting enhanced police

Rimmi  
Purewal  
Mission RCMP



**3. Remove your garage door opener** from your vehicle! While access is to your garage, it essentially acts as a second key to your home. Deny offenders the opportunity to gain access to your garage door opener by treating it like any key – bring it indoors with you.

**4. Install a garage door alarm.** These operate similar to alarm locks on windows; if they sense any motion at the garage, they will emit a loud noise and notify homeowners as well as neighbours.

**Bonus Tip:** Ensure the door connecting the garage to your home is always locked. Remember, it takes an offender's desire + a target + an opportunity for an offender to commit a crime. By taking away the opportunity, you have prevented the crime.

Christine Kirby  
On behalf of ICBC

enforcement and local community events with 'Get Home Safe' material.

### The Rules

- It's a criminal offence in Canada to drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Police can demand a breath sample from any driver they lawfully stop, not just if they suspect a driver has been drinking.
- Penalties for impaired driving offences include immediate roadside prohibitions such as 24-hour to 90-day driving suspensions, vehicle impoundments, fines, jail time, impacts on your insurance and more.

# Notes from the President

Regan Borisenko, Vernon RCMP

In 1991, the Block Watch Program was started in Coquitlam, North Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminister, Port Moody, Maple Ridge and Langley, making this their 30<sup>th</sup> birthday! The Block Watch Society of BC was officially registered in BC as of April 1993, so the Society is officially 28 years in the making.



The Block Watch Society, through its Board of Directors, is the governing body for the Block Watch program. We are the only operational, province-wide, community safety group working under the umbrella of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch, of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

What the Society promotes is an organizational strategy using partnerships between the police and the community to proactively provide community safety and education training to address issues of crime, community safety and the fear of crime. Block Watch Coordinators study the skills and principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design; Crime Prevention Through Social Development, problem solving models and various crime reduction strategies in order to pass along this education and skill set to the communities in their care.

In keeping with the priorities of the Block Watch Society and our commitment to the Ministry we will be starting our Zoom program training for our members to ensure our message and program updates are in the hands of the Coordinators delivering them. The first dates are May 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> for these 2 hour Zoom "Train the Trainer" sessions.

Looking to the future of the Block Watch Program, we are only getting stronger and into more communities across the Province. Our message has been shared Canada-wide with the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention and around the world as published in the International CPTED Association (ICA) October – December 2020 Newsletter.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I want to thank you for your participation, and we look forward to keeping communities safe across BC for years to come.



## POLICE AGENCY DIRECTORS:

Regan Borisenko – City of Vernon  
Dawn Dickinson – Burnaby RCMP  
Kimberly Kelley – Victoria PD  
Leah Marlay – Vancouver PD  
Mike Moyer – R.D. of North Okanagan  
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## OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT

YouTube: [Block Watch of BC](https://www.youtube.com/blockwatchofbc)  
Twitter: [@bcblockwatch](https://twitter.com/bcblockwatch)  
Facebook: [@bcblockwatch](https://www.facebook.com/bcblockwatch)

**GRANTS AVAILABLE:** The Block Watch Society of BC is happy to announce that we have been approved to distribute the 2021 Safe Community Grants. **The application window is from May 12 to June 30.** The application should be sent to you by your Block Watch Coordinator, or you can download it from our website (<https://blockwatch.com/>) starting May 12.

*We acknowledge the support of the Province of British Columbia.*

*The Block Watch Society of BC Newsletter is a collective effort of volunteer Directors and Society staff. This edition was edited by Gabriel Pelletier. If you see any errors, or if you have ideas for a future issue, please notify [blockwatch@blockwatch.com](mailto:blockwatch@blockwatch.com)*