



Sunshine Country Club Estates Neighborhood Watch- CERT

Meetings held the Third Monday of Each Month - Retzlaff Hall - 3pm Sharp

Take a Stand! Join Neighborhood Watch - undoubtedly one of the oldest and most well-known crime prevention programs in history.

Welcome to our community. This communication is a current special edition for 2025. Our Neighborhood Watch aims to foster a strong and positive working relationship with the local Police Departments in Harlingen and Combes to "Take a Bite Out of Crime". All residents are the "eyes and ears" of SCCE.

Lights On - Lock Up and Look Out for Each Other.

Since there can't be a Law Enforcement Officer on every corner, citizen involvement is necessary to prevent crime. And we are the ones who know what is going on at Sunshine. By cooperating with each other, Sunshine residents can help fight crime in a very effective way – before it begins!

Busy schedules, great weather, golf, cards, pool exercises etc. can often disconnect us from our surroundings, therefore leading us to an increased risk of crime and a decreased risk of safety. A Neighborhood Watch (NW) Program is essential. Currently, our NW Program is fairly active, but we can always use volunteers. You are cordially invited and encouraged to assist us. We meet on the 3rd Monday of the Month at 3pm in Retzlaff Hall. We have no dues, and the Coffee is always on. Our famous Cookie Bakers usually *do a dozen*. Each monthly meeting brings us together to address current concerns and crime preventions techniques. Officer Benny Bravo of the Harlingen Police Department serves as our liaison.

Topics we discuss include how to recognize and report suspicious activity, how to make your home more secure, how to identify your property (Operation ID) and more. This association in SCCE allows neighbors to get to know each other and their routines so that unusual activity can be reported and investigated. Most meetings have a training session presented by the Police or Fire Department. We also have CPR training complete with an AED trainer pad available at all meetings.

Visit the NW – CERT display in the Library/Lounge. Postings are kept current. Contact Lenore Combs at 956-245-1276, if you would like to receive our email.

Neighborhood Watch History: This concept began in the late 1960's in response to increasing burglary rates. The roots of NW can be traced all the way back to Colonial Days when night watchmen patrolled the settlements and streets.

The modern-day version of NW was developed because of requests from Sheriffs and Police Departments around the country who were looking for a crime prevention program. The intent would incorporate citizen involvement and address the increasing number of burglaries taking place, especially in suburban areas. In 1972, the National Sheriffs Association took the concept a step further by seeking funding to make the program a national initiative. The first two years of the program focused primarily on disseminating info on the nature and volume of burglaries, and securing residential property to make it less vulnerable to break ins. From there it evolved into a program that promoted the establishment of ongoing local NW groups. This effort encouraged citizens to partner with their local Law Enforcement Agencies to reduce various types of "neighborhood crime".

Our Sunshine Neighborhood Watch formed in the aftermath of Hurricane Dolly in July of 2008, because of the looting that occurred. It is a volunteer group and was established with the help and guidance of the Harlingen Police Department to take a bite out of crime. We do not have police powers. We alert police when encountering strange/suspicious activity. We should never confront suspicious individuals. Our Duty is to **Observe & Report**, with "tools of the trade": Pencil, Note Pad and Cell Phone.

Since its inception, our NW has grown from an "extra pair of eyes and ears" approach to a much more proactive program. Our community-oriented endeavor provides a unique infrastructure that brings together our Law Enforcement from both Harlingen

and Combes, along with citizens for the protection of their community.

CERT Team: The CERT Team (**Community Emergency Response Team**) is associated with the Harlingen Fire Department and offers a 20-hour course which is held at the Fire Department. CERT teaches us about disasters. The CERT Team includes Sunshine residents who have completed special training. They are knowledgeable in First Aid, CPR, AED, Light Search & Rescue etc. There is usually an annual class offered for CERT training at the Fire Department.

CERT Team History: CERT was developed by the Los Angeles Fire Department in 1985 following a massive earthquake. Communities were stranded. The CERT model was developed for us to *“hold down the fort until professional help arrives”*. Our local CERT Team also originated after Hurricane Dolly. Although our residents were not evacuated (it was only a Cat 1 storm), the rain became heavy and hung around steadily for over 24 hours. The result was severe flooding and wind damage. Thankfully, nobody was hurt, however, the storm left behind shingles, aluminum, and other debris. Since our community was classified as an RV Park – why would any residents remain here during the hurricane???? Power was out, Texas Avenue had carp swimming around, other critters were displaced. Mosquitos were abundant, and we endured hot & sticky weather! Finally, and by accident, Harlingen Fire Chief Darrell Loftus found us on a routine check. Folks were out of gas for generators, food was spoiled, medications were damaged or running low, etc. Temperatures and tempers were becoming testy. Chief Loftus supplied ice, gas, and other amenities. Finally, the water level receded and driving out was possible. But those few days were a challenge! Hindsight being 20:20, we are now working smarter, not harder.

We decided to begin a free class at Harlingen Fire Station 8 (3410 E. Grimes) just past the airport on Loop 499. Classes included Disaster Preparedness, Fire Safety, Medical Ops, Light Search and Rescue, CERT Organization, Disaster Psychology, and Terrorism & CERT. There is a Neighborhood Watch display in the Library/Lounge with a Patrol calendar and up-to-date notices. Please visit. **“The SEPO Monthly Newsletter”** will contain an article. However, if there is an alert, you will receive information through the SEPO Email Website contact. If you wish to be included in the Email Listing, please contact Lenore Combs at 956-245-1276.

PROJECTS: Sunshine NW is dedicated to our Community’s Safety! We welcome your input and encourage you to join a project. We have about 304 homes in Sunshine. If

each home gave a day's service....well, that would be AMAZING! We will work around your schedule. You will be thoroughly oriented. We will make you feel welcome, train you, and provide you with almost unlimited opportunities.

Evening Patrols: Mary Grande gets this project together each month with volunteers who sign up mostly for an evening patrol. Hours are available and orientation is Mandatory. "Patrols" is the heart of our NW program. We have a bright Orange Vest complete with reflective detailing. Even if you walk the dog or get the mail, wearing your vest gives the idea that "Eyes of Sunshine are Upon Them" – workers, contractors, laborers, of unwelcome visitors. We can arrange for you to complete a "practice run" to familiarize you with the patrol route/routine. You will learn some very interesting information about security. We have a dedicated NW Golf Cart. (The McGruff Mobile – named after the dog.) Check it out! We encourage two volunteers to patrol. One drives the Golf Cart while the other volunteer can take notes, call in suspicious activity, etc. Safety is first and your job is to Observe and Report. No weapons are allowed. Contact Lenore Combs (956-245-1276) for more information.

Daytime Patrols: These patrols are similar to the Evening Patrols and require orientation. However, these patrols can be done on foot, bicycle, golf cart (NW or personal) or vehicle. We still encourage teams. You can be our eyes & ears while getting the mail or walking the dog! And most pups enjoy a Golf Cart ride, too!

Block Captains and Co-Captains: It's best to have a recruiter for this. These special volunteers make NW tick. All nine streets ideally should have a volunteer Block Captain as a point of contact. The Co-Captains are those volunteers who are next door to four or six homes – just keeping an eye out. This is simply for communication. This key person is an integral component in keeping your block actively informed, from crime prevention efforts to exchange of information. These suggestions are not all inclusive. Developing a communication system assists in distributing vital information to your neighbors. Facilitate unity! Get new residents involved! Obtain their support! Rekindle older connections with residents who have gotten away from the mission. Remind your neighbors of an upcoming meeting. Block Captains and Co-Captains are the glue!

Vendor Patrols: Various folks usually patrol every morning. Residents can do this easily while walking around or driving. These are random patrols and are done regularly as we are looking for the **Vendor Tag**. These vendor tags hang from the rear-

view mirror of contractor vehicles. Residents are encouraged to contact NW when a vendor comes to do work at your house. These hanging tags can also be issued to residents who may have daytime and/or nighttime caregivers. Residents may get their caregiver a gate clicker, however, the resident assumes responsibility for the clicker. Also, we have a **Temporary Visitor Tag**, if needed, for extended company. This could prevent a robbery in plain sight. Any unmarked contractor vehicle should have one. Any resident can call Lenore Combs at 956-245-1276 or inquire at the SEPO Office.

Operation ID: We work on this project with the Harlingen Police Department. A resident can complete a form listing your personal possessions – make, model and serial number etc., and then arrange to have the information engraved with your ID number on them. We will give you the recognizable decal for your door. It is good for your insurance Company too.

Special Projects:

9-1-1 Helpers: These volunteers assist you at any hour of the day or night. For example, if you are contemplating notifying 911 because of an emergency, a volunteer or two can go to your home and stay with you while you call and/or they can go to the gate and watch for the EMTs to get here. (Once you call 911, you are on the phone until help arrives. Having a 9-1-1 Helper is handy).

FYI: There is a **red flashing rotating light** for the EMTs attached to the front gate. It must be manually turned on. It aids the EMTs in finding Sunshine as opposed to looking for us in the Encore RV Park. This Red Light is visible down past the corner of Gayle Street towards the gas station.

2-1-1 Helpers: Cameron County Registry for Mandatory Evacuation: The Governor will activate this project, when deemed necessary. Our philosophy and best bet are to get “Out of Dodge” as this county program is for those who really need it. However, it is available.

Be-A-Buddy: This project is encouraged and is a more personal choice. For example, I may ask my good friend to be my Buddy, and I have their phone number posted on

my fridge. This way, if I am experiencing a health concern, they could assist with notifying EMTs and the 9-1-1 Helpers.

Vehicle Decals: This square orange reflective decal is on our vehicles (rear window-upper corner – driver side) so we know this vehicle belongs in Sunshine. If someone is in here without one, they could be visited/questioned by an inquiring resident. (For example, if you see someone waiting at the gate to come in, and they don't have an orange decal, we suggest you discretely follow them to their intended location. **Observe & Report!** If they look suspicious, call the Harlingen Non-Emergency Number 956-216-5940 to report “suspicious activity”, or 911 if you think this is an emergency. Try to have details for the Police such as a description, the license plate number, as well as the vehicle make, model, color etc. If they leave in a big hurry, try to notice which way they headed. Do not attempt to apprehend. We don't want you to get hurt and we have no law enforcement authority. If you think there are weapons involved – report that.

Gate Codes, Keypads, & Clickers: Occasionally, we change the Front Gate Code. It will not affect your Clickers. Call Lenore Combs (956-245-1276) or the SEPO Office (956-425-1420) with concerns.

RED Medical Envelope: NW provides RED medical envelopes for both people and their pets. The medical information should be updated as needed annually or if medical information changes. When completed and/or updated, keep the envelopes attached to the front of your refrigerator. EMTs will automatically look there. If you have a **Do Not Resuscitate** or **Do Not Intubate**, keep that important paper in there too. (Otherwise, EMS will attempt to resuscitate the patient enroute to the hospital.)

Vial Of L.I.F.E. This recognized program is available to you. There are two red decals, a brief health history form and a baggie. You put one red decal visibly on your door or window for the EMTs – Rescue folks to see - and the other red decal is on the baggie which has your completed health history form in it. This baggie is in or on your fridge – *in plain sight!* We ask for a \$1.00 donation to NW for the baggie, two red ID decals and two health forms. There will be forms at the NW October meeting as you should keep them current. Keep them in your car or RV too.

Readiness Team: This committee drew up an Emergency Plan after Hurricane Dolly. We update/revise it annually, as necessary. Whether you are a Winter Texan or not,

your input is valuable, and you are invited to help us. We meet for the NW April meeting to stay current and make revisions.

Citizen's Police Academy (CPA): The Citizens Police Academy is a 40-hour course held at Harlingen Police Department. Classes are offered twice yearly, and we learn about Police procedures and activities. (Criminal Law, Traffic Law, Use of Force, Family Violence, Juvenile Procedures, Handgun Qualifications, Narcotics, K-9, Baton/OC Spray Training, SWAT, etc.)

Safety & Security Measures: Several talented NW members have valuable information on these various items. Come to a NW meeting and see! **Refrigerator magnets:** These are business card size magnets. They are free, compliments of the Woman's Club. They include the phone number to **report suspicious activity – 956 216 – 5940**. This number is answered by an employee (24 x 7) from the Harlingen Police Department Dispatcher on Loop 499.

Amber Security Lights on Golf Carts: If you buy a cigarette lighter receptacle for your Golf Cart, NW has a few helpers who will assist with installing it for you. Then you can outfit your Golf Cart with a security light for patrol. A kind and generous resident donated several of these to us.

Storage Lot: For entry, use your gate opener.

Cameras: These are located throughout the community. There is an Infra-red Sensaphone System in Storage Lot. We can always use help in looking after them. It is short, sporadic work. Orientation and mentoring are available. (SEPO Board looks after these.)

Additional Information:

Life Alert Systems: Several residents have one of these. We do not endorse any particular brand name. If you are interested, Lenore Combs at 956-245-1276.

Sunshine Emergency Contact Information Form: We all completed this form when we moved into the Sunshine Community. Keeping the information current is the operative word! The forms are retained in the SEPO Office in a designated cabinet. Old and outdated phone numbers are no help in contacting you. Please keep this

information current.

Worry Box: These are index cards that the CERT Readiness Team uses in case of a resident's emergency. For example, several residents lost their medications during Hurricane Dolly when the power went out, and these medications needed to be kept cool. Some residents have Oxygen condensers. They need power. So, this is why we created a "fluid" **Worry Box** where any resident may voluntarily provide their medical information in case of an impending concern. We also have a plat of the community which is available to Law Enforcement and EMTs in case of emergencies. For example, Kathy Wunderlich's CERT Team provides a working list of summer residents.

Helpful Tips for All Residents: Some responsibilities of NW members might be to learn neighbor's names, be able to recognize their vehicles and be alert to unusual or suspicious behavior. Call the Police Department – do not take any risks to prevent crime or try to make an arrest. **REPORT** the crime - including the activity (car stolen, break in from back door, etc.). Watch your neighbor's home when they have gone home ("up North"). Ask them to return the favor. Do not leave a signal that says, "**no one is home**". Pick up packages and newspapers. Be involved – it is the most effective way to reduce/prevent crime and make Sunshine safe.

Good Reporting Notes are Vital:

What occurred? What were they doing?

- When? (Time?)
- Where? (Address?)
- How many suspects were seen? (**Accurate Descriptions Are Essential!**)
- Did you hear any conversations?
- Did they take anything?
- Which direction were the suspects heading?
- Any guns or other weapons?
- Vehicle – Make? Model? Color? License Plate? Markings?
- Were there any other witnesses? (provide names, addresses & phone numbers)

No Fact or Detail Is Too Trivial!!!

TO WRAP UP:

- Don't forget our Monthly Meetings (**3rd Monday at 3pm in Retzlaff Hall**).
- Visit the NW-CERT display in the Library/Lounge. Postings are kept current. (Contact Lenore Combs if you want to get on the NW Email distribution list and receive our emails.)
- Duty: Observe & Report! Tools of the trade: pencil, notepad, and cell phone.
- Security begins at your house. We are living in a *new normalcy*, and the burden is on you, so **Lights On – Lock Up and Look Out** for each other! If you see something – say something!
- Timely communication is of utmost importance!

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

Emergencies: 9-1-1

To Report Suspicious Activity:

Harlingen Police Department: 956-216-5940

(**NOTE**: This number is staffed at the Police Department (24 x 7) by an office employee. Have your details ready.)

Combes Police Department: 956-425-7131 (21626 Hand Road).

More Extended Information on the Neighborhood Watch is available online at <https://www.sunshinecountryclub.com/neighborhood-watch-cert>. There should be 5 copies of the updated training manual available in the Lounge/Library. However, they must all be tucked in someone's home – please return to the Lounge/Library. Look for a bright orange folder. Good info for all. Sign it out, review it, and *please* return it.

If you have questions regarding any of the Volunteer Opportunities mentioned, Classes or Meetings, please do not hesitate to contact me!

Thank You!

-*Lenore Combs* Phone: 956-245-1276