

Neighborhood Watch

Guidelines for Ranch Community Members

Neighborhood Watch aims to build safer, stronger, and more resilient communities. Our primary aim with The Ranch Neighborhood Watch is to strive to keep the sentiment that people reported in the latest Ranch Survey (Fall 2022) – overall respondents reported that they feel safe living here at The Ranch. To further these aims and ensure confidence in The Ranch Neighborhood Watch, residents should understand the standards of behavior and policies adopted by the Neighborhood Watch Committee.

Responsibilities of Neighborhood Watch Members

- Learn your neighbors' names and be able to recognize them and their vehicles.
- Be alert to unusual or suspicious behavior in your neighborhood* and inform your Neighborhood Watch Captain. Call the LaPlata County Sheriff's Office (EMERGENCY 911 – Non-Emergency 970 764 0779).
- Do NOT take any risks to prevent a crime or approach trespassers. Remember your job is to REPORT suspicious activity. Apprehending is the responsibility of the professionals at the Sheriff's Department.
- Watch your neighbors' homes when they are away. Ask them to return the favor. This includes picking up mail/newspapers and putting back garbage cans if left out. Do not leave signals that say "no one is home."
- Be involved. It is the most effective way to reduce/prevent crime and make your neighborhood safe.

Trespassing

Nearly 87% of respondents in the most recent survey (Fall 2022) indicated they see The Ranch as "a private community whose common elements and facilities exist for the benefit of owners, their renters and their guests."

Knowing what to do when you notice someone on our property who does not live here is not a "one size fits all" kind of situation. A person may not know they are trespassing, they may be a guest or relative of a resident, they could be looking at homes for sale, while at other times a trespasser may be a frequent offender.

We believe we should give people the benefit of the doubt. There really should be no need to engage individuals unless you suspect ill-intent. If you do choose to

engage, politely ask, for example, if you could help them. Or inquire if they are new residents. If they are comfortable giving you this information, you might be able to let things be. If individuals seem suspicious, you can let your Section Captain know and/or call the Sheriff.

We do not want anyone to be confrontational. Taking a picture of a suspicious vehicle and its license plate, for example, is okay; taking a photo of an individual is not advised. We have many “No Trespassing” signs around our community, and we have recently posted a “Neighborhood Watch” sign – let’s give the postings a chance to work. We have already seen a difference since the signs have been posted.

The above standards should help guide us in both suspicious and trespassing situations.

* See “Suspicious Activities & How to Report Them”

** Neighborhood Watch Section Captain Roster

Neighborhood Watch Suspicious Activities & How to Report Them

Neighborhood Watch policy is to have the members of our community notice any suspicious activities and, if necessary, report them to authorities.

What behaviors are suspicious?

- Consider the context. Take for example, a person sitting in a parked car on the road. Someone may be trying to find an address or make a phone call and they then drive away. At night, the context has changed, especially if the lights of the vehicle are off.
- It is not about being confrontational. Do not put yourself in harm's way by engaging a suspect.

Police associate the following behaviors with potential criminal activity:

- A person who is not your neighbor walking about your neighbor's home and looking in windows or trying to gain access by forcing open a window or door.
- A person knocking on your door and asking to speak to someone who does not live there and/or who may also go to other homes knocking on doors. This is a tactic used by people with the intent to burglarize to see if people are home. Keep in mind that people may also mistakenly go to the wrong home for any number of reasons.
- Someone claiming to represent a utility company who is either not wearing a uniform, does not produce proper identification upon request, or does not have a company logo vehicle.
- Someone using binoculars or other devices to peer into your house or your neighbors' houses.
- At night, a person sitting inside a vehicle that you do not recognize with the lights out for an extended period.
- A vehicle you do not recognize that is circling multiple times around the neighborhood.
- An unusually high flow of people coming and going from a particular home and visiting for just a couple of minutes.
- A van or large truck backed up to an entrance or garage when the resident is away.

If there is an eminent threat, such as an attempted break in, call 911. Give a full description and location. For suspicious activities, in most cases, call the LaPlata Sheriff's Office dispatch at **(970)764-0779**. Full description including location, type of activity, number of persons, their estimated age, sex, height, weight, hair, clothing, and identifiable marks, if possible. For vehicles: make, model, plate, and direction of travel.