

CITY OF PALMDALE

NEWS RELEASE

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"An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth a Pound of Cure" Rings True in Community Crime Prevention

PALMDALE – One of the reasons why the crime rate in Palmdale has dropped more than 32 percent since 2008 is a continued commitment to community crime prevention reflected in a solid partnership and between local law enforcement, City of Palmdale staff, and local residents.

"'Crime prevention' is different from the philosophy of 'crime control,'" said Palmdale's Community Safety Supervisor Kelly Long. "Instead of the traditional approach, which emphasizes the reaction to crime and apprehension of the criminal, crime prevention emphasizes modifying the attitude and behavior of the resident through education, as well as the modification of the environment to eliminate the opportunity for crime."

"Community crime prevention is residents joining together with law enforcement to be responsible for the safety of their neighborhoods, homes and places of employment," Long explained. "This provides a unique opportunity for both police and residents to become involved in order to proactively reduce crime in our communities."

One out of six Americans lives in a community that has an organized volunteer anti-crime program. One of the most popular and effective programs nationwide is Neighborhood Watch.

"In Palmdale there are over 400 individual Neighborhood Watch groups," said Palmdale's Crime Prevention Officer Ruth Oschmann. "With more than ten million participants nationwide, is the least costly and most effective community crime

prevention program there is. When the Neighborhood Watch program has the commitment and involvement of residents, neighborhoods become a safer and more enjoyable place to be. Statistics tell us that good neighbor is the best crime prevention tool around!”

Belonging to a Neighborhood Watch group does not require a lot of personal time. Many groups meet once a year simply to connect and get updates.

“Neighborhood Watch is the best and easiest way to learn about crime trends, disaster preparedness, home security and personal safety issues,” said Palmdale’s Crime Prevention Officer Kery German. “It also serves as a way to alert your neighbors to potential problems. Perhaps you or someone you know was a victim of a home burglary. Maybe you’ve seen signs of drug dealing or there has been a string of thefts from yards and vehicles. Or perhaps nothing has happened and you want to keep it that way. Either way, you can make a difference by getting together with neighbors who share your concerns.”

Palmdale Sheriff’s Station Captain Don Ford is also a big believer in community crime prevention. “Crime prevention is everyone’s responsibility,” Ford said. “But even more important is the opportunity Neighborhood Watch provides to get to know your neighbors as humans. Many of us are busy with our families and our jobs, but we often only wave at our neighbors. I encourage everyone to participate in Neighborhood Watch. Those neighbors you meet and talk to will be the ones that will call 911 when they see something amiss at your home, but they will also be the ones that will stop by and check on you when they miss that regular contact and that could save lives.”

According to feedback received by City staff, one barrier that has kept some individuals from starting or joining a Neighborhood Watch group is fear.

“Some have seen crime in their neighborhood and they are scared that the criminals will retaliate if they get involved in community crime prevention,” Long said. “That is certainly understandable, but there are ways to counter and overcome fear.”

Long notes three key elements that will eliminate fear and make any neighborhood safer and stronger.

“First, join together,” she said. “There is strength in numbers. By forming a Neighborhood Watch group with your neighbors, you create an environment where residents support each other and don’t feel isolated or alone in the midst of criminal activity.”

“Second, become educated on how to effectively report suspicious activity safely and anonymously. Neighborhood Watch is about being the eyes and ears of law enforcement, not the arm and legs. No one is ever encouraged to put themselves in any danger when witnessing crime or suspicious activity.”

“Third, you don’t have to meet where the problem is; you can meet several blocks away at a local church, community center or even at City Hall,” Long noted.

“In Palmdale, thousands of residents have become educated on crime prevention or have taken action to protect themselves, their families and their communities against crime by being a part of a Neighborhood Watch program,” German said. “You can join them by calling the city’s Neighborhood Services department at 661/267-5170 and talking to a Crime Prevention Officer today.”

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