



Community Watch Newsletter



Volume 10, Issue 4

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Our Mission

The mission of the Bonner County Sheriff's Office Community Watch Program is to proactively partner with law-abiding citizens to prevent and reduce crime. This will be accomplished through communication, crime prevention education and assisting communities, neighborhoods and businesses in achieving a safe environment for its residents.

Thank you for stepping up in your area of Bonner County and taking a leadership position in your local community watch group.

As of this writing we have 101 groups, 66 Neighborhood Captains, and 1184 Members

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Security Hints and Tips

How to Safely Shop on Line

Do you regularly use your debit card for online purchases? Do you have payment information saved on online shopping accounts? Do you use autofill to enter your payment information? If you answered yes to any of these questions, your payment information may be at risk. Online retailers are a popular target for cybercriminals, which makes your information vulnerable to a data breach. A data breach is when a cyberattack results in the theft of private user information.

If you shop online and want to secure your payment information from a data breach, consider the following tips:

Avoid Making Payments with Debit Cards

When you make purchases online, always use a credit card instead of a debit card. Debit cards are linked to your bank account, so if a bad guy can access your debit card information, they can access your entire bank account. Because debit cards use the cash available in your bank, disputing a charge can lead to the long and complicated process of replacing stolen funds. Credit card purchases add to your debt, which means that a fraudulent charge won't immediately impact your finances. Using a credit card for online purchases allows you to dispute a charge, without losing access to your cash.

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❄ Winter Driving Safety Edition

Here is an updated section for your newsletter focused on winter driving safety, tailored for **Bonner County's** challenging snowy and icy road conditions.

Driving Safely in the Snow: Tips for Bonner County Roads

As winter approaches, Bonner County roads can quickly become hazardous. Whether you are driving down Highway 95 or navigating local rural roads, staying safe requires changing how you drive. Share these essential winter driving tips with your neighborhood Block Watch group:

Slow Down and Leave Space: Speed limits are meant for dry roads, not snow and ice. Drop your speed well below the limit and triple your normal following distance behind the vehicle in front of you.

Know Your Brakes: If your vehicle has an Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), apply firm, steady pressure if you begin to skid. Do not pump the brakes.

Clear Your Entire Vehicle: Before hitting the road, clear all snow and ice off your windshield, windows, headlights, and roof. Snow flying off your roof can blind drivers behind you.

Watch for "Black Ice": Roads that look wet might actually be covered in transparent black ice. Be especially cautious on bridges, overpasses, and shaded curves where ice forms first.

Equip Your Vehicle: Ensure your tires have proper tread (or switch to winter tires) and

check that your windshield wiper fluid is rated for sub-zero temperatures.

Prepare a Winter Vehicle Emergency Kit

We encourage all residents to keep a winter survival kit in their vehicles. A basic kit should include:

- A small snow shovel and ice scraper.
- A bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction.
- Jumper cables or a portable battery jump starter.
- Warm blankets, extra gloves, and a hat.
- A flashlight with extra batteries.
- Non-perishable snacks and bottled water.

Stay Informed Before You Go: Before heading out, always check local road conditions. You can view live traffic cameras and winter road reports across North Idaho by visiting the [Idaho Transportation Department 511 system](#).

For local non-emergency road hazards or downed trees blocking paths, remember you can reach **Bonner County Sheriff's Dispatch non-emergency number at (208) 265-5525**.



What is Suspicious Activity?

Suspicious activity is any behavior or event that seems out of place for your specific neighborhood, or that suggests a crime may be occurring, is about to occur or has occurred. Neighbors know their community best; trust your instinct if something feels wrong.

Common Examples to Watch For:

- **Unfamiliar Vehicles:** Vehicles moving slowly down streets repeatedly, cruising without lights, or parking with occupants observing homes.
- **Property Trespassing:** Individuals walking into backyards, looking through windows, or testing door knobs of homes or parked cars.
- **Unusual Door Solicitations:** People knocking on doors without a clear, legitimate purpose, or attempting to peer inside when a resident answers.
- **Apparent Distress:** Signs of forced entry, open doors on a neighbor's property while they are away, or hearing screams or screeching tires.

How to Document & Report Effectively

When calling dispatch, try to gather as much detail as safely possible. **Never put yourself in danger** or confront a suspect to get information.



Describe the Person(s)

- **Physical build:** Sex, race, estimated age, height, and weight.
- **Clothing:** Color and type of jacket, shirt, pants, hat, or shoes.
- **Distinguishing features:** Hair color/style, tattoos, scars, facial hair, or glasses.

Describe the Vehicle(s):

- **The Basics:** Make, model, body style (e.g., sedan, SUV, pickup), and color.
- **Crucial Info:** License plate number (even a partial plate helps) and state.
- **Modifications:** Dents, bumper stickers, custom wheels, or broken lights.

Who to Call

Situation Type Action / Number Emergency

Crime in progress, fire, medical crisis, or immediate threat to life. **Call 911**

Non-Emergency Dispatch

Suspicious vehicle, cold crime, or property damage after the fact. **Call (208) 265-5525**

Sheriff's Main Office

General questions, and/or non-urgent neighborhood concerns.
Call (208) 263-8417



Humor in Uniform



Watch Captains Questions and Answers

This newsletter is as much yours as it is the Community Force Program. As such we want to ensure you have an opportunity to ask questions and get answers to issues you may have. The questions will remain anonymous, but the issues and discussion will be an important part of our communication and education process.

Call or email your question(s) to Mike Brambila at 208-263-8417 ext. 3049
mike.brambila@bonnercountyid.gov



Bonner County Sheriff Office Webpage

Check out the BCSO web page at www.bonnerso.org. While there browse through the various sections. Under the Service Section you will see the link to the Neighborhood Watch section where you can find additional information on how to protect yourself and your homes.

We are now using the benefits of social media and sharing all press releases on the BCSO Facebook page.

You don't have to sign up for Facebook to look at it - just click on the Facebook icon at the bottom of the www.bonnerso.org homepage. When the Facebook page pops up click on the "Not Now" prompt at the bottom of the page and you now access the BCSO Facebook page.

www.facebook.com/Bonnercountysheriff1

Crime Prevention

While you are preparing your home and property for winter and you happen to be outside, take some extra time to store away any extra tools that have been left out, make sure your outside lights are working, trim back bushes and trees for visibility on your property from potential criminals and check window screens to see if they are in need of repair.

Remember, that most property crimes are crimes of opportunity, criminals love to take advantage of our tendency to keep our property unsecured.

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