

## Stop Crime with Business Watch Programs

Garages, services stations, and convenience stores are often targets for burglary, auto theft, and vandalism. These crimes are typically committed in areas that cannot be observed by an attendant behind the counter, or in secluded areas of parking or storage lots. Business Watch programs, similar to Neighborhood Watch groups, seek to reduce commercial crime and the fear of crime for both business owners and customers.

To get started, contact your local Chamber of Commerce. They can give you information on how to launch a Business Watch program with neighboring merchants, or direct you to members already located in your community.

The *Small Business Crime Prevention Guide*, published by the Texas Department of Insurance, offers the following ideas to help business owners prevent crime:

- Get to know neighboring businesses and occupants including schools, civic groups, libraries, and clubs.
- Be alert and report suspicious behavior to law enforcement immediately, even if it means taking a chance on being wrong.
- A telephone tree is an effective means of sharing information with neighboring businesses. Should a problem develop, each business is responsible for calling others on the tree.
- Secure your property thoroughly. Ask local law enforcement officials to conduct a survey of your business and provide advice on lights, alarms, locks, and other security measures.
- Engrave all valuable office equipment and tools with an identification, tax, license, or other unique number.
- Aggressively advertise the Business Watch group. Post signs and stickers stating that the neighboring block of businesses is organized to prevent crime.

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If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at [safety1st@markelcorp.com](mailto:safety1st@markelcorp.com).