

# Block Watch Beat

A Newsletter for Block Watch Community Safety

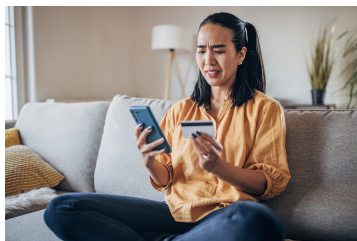
## KEEP YOUR PERSONAL AND TAX INFORMATION SAFE

Tax season can be a stressful time of the year. If you are hiring someone to do your taxes, make sure to do some research beforehand because scammers are waiting for opportunities to steal your personal and financial information, money, and identity.



**“Canada Revenue Agency will never ask for a payment via text message”**

- Choose a credible tax professional and always verify their credentials.
- Check for consumer complaints to see if there have been any complaints filed against them and have they been resolved. i.e. Better Business Bureau, Chartered Professional Accountants British Columbia.
- Meet with the person that will be handling your taxes before handing over your personal information.
- Request a quote in writing before authorizing the work.
- Do not sign a blank tax return. Only sign after you have reviewed the completed CRA tax form. You are responsible for everything that appears on your tax return.
- Do not post or send any personal or tax related information on any social media platforms.
- Whenever possible, only send hard copies of documents to service provider and not via email.
- Be on the watch for tax-related scams: phishing, identity theft and CRA scams.



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## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: WILDFIRES & HEAT WAVES

Disaster can strike unexpectedly, whether it's an earthquake, flood, heat wave or especially relevant in British Columbia; wildfires. While government agencies play a crucial role in organizing and planning for severe wildfire conditions, individual citizens must also take responsibility to ensure their own safety and that of their families. Here are some essential steps to prepare yourself:



### 1. KNOW THE RISKS

Understand the natural hazards that could affect your area. Stay informed via news or social media channels about **local fire conditions** or **heat wave warnings**. For example, heat waves, can be life-threatening for **vulnerable populations** (seniors and/or children).

Identify potential hazards within your surroundings and take measures to reduce the risk of injury.

- Close **doors** and **windows** during the hottest parts of the day.
- Use **curtains** to keep sunlight out.
- Be aware of **evacuation routes** and **cooling centres**.

### 2. MAKE A PLAN, TEST IT AND PERFECT IT

Remember, preparedness is key! Create a **comprehensive evacuation plan** and practice it regularly. When an emergency strikes, this familiarity will reduce stress and promote efficient action.



In your plan, you can include the following:

- A **master list of family members** and **emergency contact numbers**.
- A **meeting place** near your residence, where everyone can gather during an emergency.
- Stay hydrated and cool by **drinking plenty of fluids**.
- Check on **vulnerable** family members, friends and neighbours.

### 3. TIME TO ASSEMBLE YOUR EMERGENCY KIT



FIRST AID KIT | WATER BOTTLES | SUNSCREEN | VITAMIN C & MEDICATIONS | CANNED FOODS & A CAN-OPENER

## BLIND SPOT: EYES AND EARS IN OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT

If you have been in the Crime Prevention industry for a few years, you will be familiar with CPTED, which stands for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design. And you will be aware of general home security tips and tricks. The combination of the two bring forward powerful concepts to reduce your chances of being the victim of a break and enter, trespass and thefts from your property.

The concepts – such as surveillance, territoriality, and lighting – are used to solve many challenges, but still, the subject of this article is stubborn. How do we remove the opportunity for crime that is a result of our built environment? This article outlines how every home has at least a few such gaps in a home's security structure.



A “built environment” includes the structure of a home and any building or neighbourhood it is connected to, such as the foundation, roads and infrastructure. It also includes the style of the home and the layout of the rooms. To explain why this is important, I have summarized these below as eyes and ears, but I don't mean this in the usual sense – that you need to be the eyes and ears for reporting to police. No, I'm talking about how your home is the eyes and ears for YOU.

**EYES** are where windows, balconies and patios are located, but ones that residents actually make use of and from which they can look out to street level.

**EARS** are where the bedrooms, reading rooms, or any quiet room where the rooms are occupied and people are quiet enough to hear noises on the outside.



The lack of these two factors leaves the opportunity for a potential thief to go unnoticed for long periods of time depending on traffic through the area and the eyes and ears of other homes immediately around these gaps. Unfortunately, the design of condo or apartment complexes can have an amplifying effect of gaps due to the predictable lay-out. In such cases, the neighbourhood as a whole has an ever greater role in coming to a solution that can support crime prevention around a shared challenge.



A simple example is a townhouse complex where the second storeys and front doors are deeply set behind garages that jut out of each home. A resident in such a complex told me that all the living and sleeping rooms are focused toward the backs of the houses. The result is the entire street is cut off from “eyes and ears,” leaving too much time for potential thieves to find opportunities for crime.



Block Watch has a role to play in teaching residents and neighbours these gaps relating to built environment so that a conscious effort is made to ensure thieves are not also seeing the same gaps without being reported to the police. Of course there are solutions, like the use of shared space (ie: dog walking, play, gardening, etc), but any solutions will be most successful when residents agree and communicate any updates about concerns with one another.




We acknowledge the support of the Province of British Columbia.

The Block Watch Society of BC newsletter is a collective effort of volunteer Directors and society staff. If you see any errors, please notify [blockwatch@blockwatch.com](mailto:blockwatch@blockwatch.com)

#### BLOCK WATCH SOCIETY OF BC

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#### OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT

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