



Issue | Holiday 2024



# SaferCommunities

News, updates, tips, and strategies for improved safety and security

Winston-Salem Neighborhood Watch Association | A 501 (c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

## IN THIS ISSUE



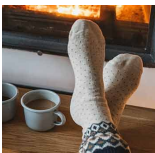
### Securing your home when you are away

Burglars typically surveil neighborhoods to determine which homes are unoccupied. The trick is to make your home appear that you are home. (2)



### Five scams you should be aware of

It seems that new scams are popping up every day. That's not far from the truth. Whether it's by phone calls, email messages, texts, or QR codes, here are some newer scams you need to know about. (3-4)



### Holiday Fire Safety

The holiday season brings joy, warmth, and celebration, but it also increases the risk of home fires. From Christmas trees to candles and cooking mishaps, taking precautions is essential to keep your home and family safe. (5)



### A tribute to Robert E. Litaker

Earlier this year, Winston-Salem Neighborhood Watch Association was saddened to learn about the passing of Mr. Bob Litaker, an esteemed colleague and former leader of the association. He will be missed. (6)



### WSNW is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit

In 2023, WSNW became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, positioning our association to more effectively provide crime prevention information to the Winston-Salem community. (6)



### Plan now for National Night Out 2025

National Night Out is an annual community-building celebration that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods and communities safer. (7)

**Thank you,  
Officer  
Costner!**



Officer V. C. Costner  
WSPD Neighborhood Watch  
Program Coordinator

**Officer V. C. Costner**, WSPD Neighborhood Watch Program Coordinator, collaborates with WSNW to create excellence for the association and provide crime prevention education to the community. He is a key team member of WSPD's Community Resources Unit, coordinating many WSPD outreach initiatives like National Night Out, Trunk or Treat, the School Book Bag Giveaway, Operation Sweet Reads, Special Olympics, and others. WSNW and the Winston-Salem Community is better and safer as a result of his leadership!

Thank you for your service,  
Officer Costner!

*Donations to WSNW are tax-deductible and enable us to provide important crime prevention information to the community—making Winston-Salem a safer place to live and work. Please consider a donation today!*



Donate

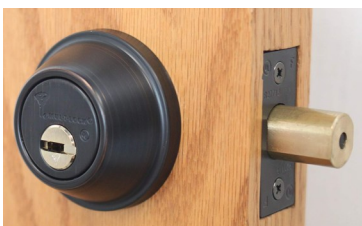
## Securing your home when you are away.

*Burglars typically surveil neighborhoods to determine which homes are unoccupied. The trick is to make your home appear just like it is when you are home.*



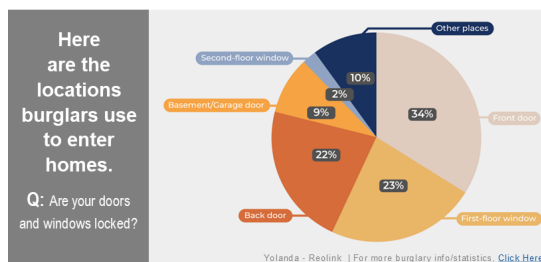
### Make your home appear to be occupied.

- **Don't leave exterior lights on continuously.** If you normally wouldn't leave your driveway, back yard, and front porch lights on around-the-clock, don't leave them on when you're away. Installing motion-activated or dusk-to-dawn lights is a much better idea!
- **Leave a locked car parked in your driveway,** or ask a trusted friend or neighbor if they would be willing to park in your driveway while you are away.
- **Place deliveries on hold,** or arrange for a trusted friend or neighbor to collect your mail, newspaper, advertising flyers, and packages while you're away. Offer to do the same for them the next time they go on vacation.
- **Make things look "normal"** by leaving a few things outside like a broom and dust-pan, half-full glass of water, and a large dog's water-bowl (whether you own a large dog, or not).
- **Use timers or smart plugs** on interior lights and have them turn on and off at about the same times they would if you were home.
- **Make it sound like someone is home** The muffled sound of talk-radio can be mistaken for conversation within your home. Set the radio on a timer to come on when you would normally wake up, and off when you would normally go to bed.
- **Arrange for routine lawn maintenance** Have your lawn mowed according to your regular schedule for doing so.



### Additional home security recommendations

- **Avoid advertising your travel plans** Don't post travel details or photos on social media until after you return. This can alert criminals that your home is empty.
- **Lock your doors and windows** Although this suggestion may sound silly, in about 34% of residential burglary cases, the burglar gains access by turning the knob and walking in through an unlocked door.
- **Reinforce your doors and windows with hardware**  
The most common entry points for burglaries are doors (65%) and windows (25%). Reinforcing these entry points with hardware like 3-inch replacement screws, dead bolt locks, window locks, etc. is a good idea.
- **Keep bushes and trees trimmed** to ensure that neighbors can see your windows and entry doors.
- **Install security devices** such as cameras, video doorbells, and security systems. An increasing number of low-priced options are available, many of which feature self-installation, security stickers or yard signs, and real-time notifications to your smartphone.
- **Secure Valuables in a Safe** Place jewelry, important documents, and other valuables in a fireproof safe. Then, if your safe is small enough, secure the safe in an inconspicuous location—like under laundry at the bottom of a clothes hamper, under the trash bag in the bottom of a wastebasket, or in a box stored in the garage, a utility closet, or the attic. Avoid leaving items like laptops or cash in sight. Hide them in the same way.





# Five scams you should be aware of

and how to protect yourself from them

1

## QR Code Scams



### Description of this scam:

QR code scams involve malicious actors using fraudulent QR codes to direct victims to phishing websites, install malware, or steal sensitive information. QR codes can be easily printed on stickers and placed over legitimate ones in public places, such as restaurants, parking meters, or advertisements, making them appear authentic.

### Example scenarios for this scam:

- \* Fake restaurant menus redirecting you to phishing websites.
- \* Fraudulent parking payment QR codes stealing credit card details.
- \* Codes in emails or text messages claiming to offer discounts, rewards, or urgent actions.

### What to watch out for:

- \* QR codes in unexpected places, such as stickers over existing codes.
- \* Links that request login credentials, payment information, or other sensitive data.
- \* Codes that direct you to poorly designed or suspicious websites.
- \* Situations where the QR code is the only available option for completing an action.

[Follow this link to learn more.](#)

### Steps to prevent becoming a victim:

#### 1. Inspect QR Codes Carefully:

- \* Look for signs of tampering, such as stickers placed over other codes.
- \* Verify the source of the code before scanning, especially in public spaces.

#### 2. Use a Secure QR Code Reader:

- \* Install a trusted QR code scanner app with built-in security features to alert you of malicious links.

#### 3. Check URLs Before Proceeding:

- \* After scanning, review the URL the code directs you to before taking any further action.
- \* Avoid clicking links with misspelled domains, unexpected extensions, or suspicious formats.

#### 4. Manually Enter URLs When Possible:

- \* If a QR code links to a website, type the URL manually instead of scanning.

#### 5. Avoid Sharing Sensitive Data:

- \* Never provide personal or financial information on a website accessed via a QR code unless you are confident of its legitimacy.

#### 6. Stay Updated:

- \* Learn about the latest QR code scam techniques and share this knowledge with others.

#### 7. Verify with the Source:

- \* If a business or service asks you to scan a QR code, confirm with them directly that it is legitimate.

### General Safety Tip

Treat QR codes with the same level of caution as you would links in unsolicited emails or texts. Scammers rely on convenience to bypass your usual security measures. By staying vigilant and using these preventive steps, you can avoid becoming a victim of QR code scams.

## 2

## Lost Pet Scams

### Description of this scam:

The "lost pet" scam preys on individuals desperately trying to find their missing pets. Scammers respond to lost pet ads (online or in public spaces) claiming they have found the missing animal. They often request payment upfront for "transportation fees," "boarding," "medical or surgery fees", or a "reward" and then disappear once payment is sent.

### Example scenarios for this scam:

- \* A scammer claims to have traveled far and requires money for transportation or shipping.
- \* Someone insists your pet is being held at a veterinary clinic or animal shelter that requires payment upfront.
- \* Fraudulent responder pretends to be a 'good Samaritan', but refuses to meet in person.

### What to watch out for:

- \* Callers or texters who refuse to provide evidence, such as a photo of the pet.
- \* Urgent demands for payment before returning the pet.
- \* Requests for payment via untraceable methods like gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency.
- \* Claims that the pet is injured and requires immediate funds for surgery or treatment.

### General Safety Tip

When dealing with a lost pet situation, act cautiously and do not let emotions cloud your judgment. Scammers exploit emotional vulnerabilities, so staying alert and following these steps can help protect you and increase the likelihood of finding your pet safely.

[Follow this link to learn more.](#)



### Steps to prevent becoming a victim:

#### 1. Request Proof:

- \* Ask for photos or specific details about the pet to confirm the person has your pet.
- \* Be cautious if they avoid answering direct questions about the pet's distinguishing features.

#### 2. Verify Their Identity:

- \* Arrange to meet in a safe, public location to confirm the return of your pet before making any payments.
- \* Bring someone with you and let others know where you are going.

#### 3. Avoid Upfront Payments:

- \* Never send money without concrete proof or returning the pet.
- \* If a reward is offered, only provide it upon safely receiving your pet.

#### 4. Report Suspicious Activity:

- \* Notify local authorities or animal control if you suspect a scam.
- \* Inform the platform or site where the lost pet ad was posted about the fraudulent response.

#### 5. Use Secure Communication Channels:

- \* Provide a temporary phone number or email when posting lost pet ads to protect your primary contact information.

#### 6. Check for Fake Stories:

- \* Be wary of overly emotional or elaborate stories about how they found your pet, especially if they seem designed to create urgency.



**Click here to learn more about these three additional scams.**

- 3** Delayed Package Scam
- 4** Malicious Ads in Search Results
- 5** Netflix Phishing Scams





# Holiday Fire Safety

*The holiday season brings joy, warmth, and celebration, but it also increases the risk of home fires. From Christmas trees to candles and cooking mishaps, taking precautions is essential to keep your home and family safe.*

Here are some important fire safety tips to protect your home and family.

## Christmas Tree Safety

Christmas trees, especially live ones, can become fire hazards if not handled properly. A dry tree can ignite in seconds, turning into a dangerous blaze.

- **Choose Fresh Trees:** Look for trees with green needles that don't fall off easily. Fresh trees are less flammable.
- **Keep Trees Hydrated:** Add water to the tree stand daily to prevent it from drying out.
- **Place Safely:** Keep trees at least three feet away from heat sources like fireplaces or radiators and ensure they don't block exits.
- **Dispose of Promptly:** Remove live trees immediately after the holidays, as dried-out trees are highly combustible.
- **Ensure artificial trees are flame-resistant:** Follow the same placement precautions as live trees.

## Holiday Lights and Decorations

Twinkling lights add festive cheer but can pose fire risks if not used properly.

- **Inspect Lights:** Check for frayed wires or broken bulbs and replace any damaged strands.
- **Use LED Lights:** LED lights are cooler and safer than traditional incandescent bulbs.
- **Avoid Overloading:** Don't plug too many strings of lights into a single outlet or power strip.
- **Turn Off When Unattended:** Use timers to automate lights, ensuring they're off when you're asleep or away.
- **Outdoor lights should be weatherproof** and installed with insulated hooks or clips, not staples or nails.

## Candle Safety

Candles provide holiday ambiance but are a leading cause of fires during the season.

- **Place Carefully:** Keep candles on stable surfaces and at least 12 inches away from flammable items like curtains or decorations.
- **Extinguish When Unattended:** Always extinguish candles before leaving the room or going to bed.
- **Use Alternatives:** Battery-operated LED candles offer the same glow without the fire risk.

## Cooking Precautions

The kitchen is a busy place during the holidays, but unattended cooking is a leading cause of home fires.

- **Stay Present:** Never leave cooking food unattended, especially on the stovetop.
- **Keep Flammables Away:** Keep towels, paper, and decorations far from heat sources.
- **Be Prepared:** Have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and know how to use it. For grease fires, smother flames with a lid or baking soda—never use water.

## Fireplace and Heater Safety

Heating equipment adds warmth but requires caution.

- **Inspect Chimneys:** Clean chimneys annually to prevent creosote buildup.
- **Use Screens:** Place a sturdy screen in front of fireplaces to prevent embers from escaping.
- **Space Heaters:** Keep portable heaters three feet away from flammable objects and turn them off when unattended.

## Emergency Preparedness

Preparation is key to minimizing harm if a fire occurs.

- **Test Smoke Alarms:** Ensure smoke detectors are functional and replace batteries regularly.
- **Plan Escape Routes:** Develop and practice a fire escape plan with your family.
- **Keep Extinguishers Handy:** Place fire extinguishers on each level of your home and ensure everyone knows how to use them.

By following these tips, you can enjoy a safe and happy holiday season. With a little preparation and care, you can focus on making joyful memories while protecting what matters most. Stay safe, and happy holidays!

## A special tribute to Robert E. (Bob) Litaker

Earlier this year, Winston-Salem Neighborhood Watch Association was saddened to learn about the passing of Mr. Bob Litaker, an esteemed colleague and former leader of the association. Bob was engaged with the Neighborhood Watch Program for over two decades, serving as a respected member of the WSNW Executive Board for over ten years and leading the Association as its President for multiple terms.



Bob greeting officers at Coffee With A Cop - Photo courtesy of Winston-Salem Journal

Always a dedicated and concerned citizen, Bob made a point of knowing all his neighbors. He had a passion and personal commitment to take an active leadership roll in the Neighborhood Watch Program, not only for his neighborhood, but for his community. Bob regularly walked his dog, looking out for suspicious behavior or unusual activities. He valued family and a safe community, adopting the “see something, say something” philosophy as his own.

Bob’s demonstrated commitment to leadership, service, and community engagement was not relegated only to the Neighborhood Watch program. Over the years, he also coached men’s basketball and the Fire Department’s baseball teams, set pins at the local bowling alley, and participated as a member of the Police Department’s Bowling League.

Bob was a caring and conscientious family man, with a wife and two children. He and his high school sweetheart celebrated their 67th Wedding Anniversary before her passing. When she departed, his heart was broken. He joined her just one year later. To those who knew him, Bob will be remembered as a “people person” — a friendly and generous man.



WSNW is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

**Winston-Salem Neighborhood Watch Association** works in the spirit of collaboration with the Winston-Salem Police Department

to foster and strengthen a culture of trust, mutual support, and open communication between citizens and law enforcement, welcoming and encouraging engagement by all diverse communities, and providing crime-prevention information, tools, and training to encourage and empower citizens to take the initiative to make their home, their neighborhood, and the City of Winston-Salem a safer place to live and work.

In 2023, WSNW was granted nonprofit status as a 501(c)(3) organization, allowing the association to accept tax-deductible donations and grants to further its mission to provide crime prevention education to the community.

The association is managed by the WSNW Executive Board, comprised of 12 volunteer members, including representation from each of the Winston-Salem Police Department Districts and at-large positions.

The Executive Board conducts Association business in accordance with the WSNW Bylaws. Filed with the State of North Carolina and the IRS, the WSNW Bylaws document outlines the Association’s mission, organizational structure, and operational procedures.

The WSNW Bylaws document is available on the WSNW website: [wsneighborhood-watch.org](https://wsneighborhood-watch.org). To access the Bylaws document directly, please [click here](#).



## Apartment Safety Checklist

Use this checklist to improve the safety and security of your apartment.

Does your—

- entry door have a deadbolt lock and peephole?
- sliding glass door have a wooden rod in the track so it can't be opened, and pins in the overhead frame so it can't be lifted out?
- landlord or building manager tightly control access to all keys?



[Click here](#) for the full printable checklist



## Start Planning Now For NNO 2025

**National Night Out** is an annual community-building celebration that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods and communities safer. Traditionally held on the first Tuesday of August, NNO is celebrated by neighbors, law enforcement officers, and first responders in thousands of communities across all 50 states, United States territories, Canada, and military bases worldwide.

Hosted by Galilee Missionary Baptist Church, Winston-Salem's 2024 NNO city-wide celebration was an outstanding suc-

### Winston-Salem's Main NNO 2024 event was an outstanding success!

Special thanks to Galilee Missionary Baptist Church for hosting the event!



cess, featuring food, music, door prizes, sponsor and vendor booths, swag, dancing, a foam cannon, bouncy houses, giant bubbles, city officials, law enforcement officers, a fire engine, fire and rescue personnel, and more!

Additional neighborhood-sponsored celebrations took place across the community as well. Now is the time to start planning your own neighborhood's NNO celebration to be held on August 5, 2025.

[Click here](#) for a **NNO Planning Guide**, designed to help you plan a successful NNO event.

[More about NNO.](#)

*Special thanks to our corporate sponsors!*



**TRADER JOE'S®**





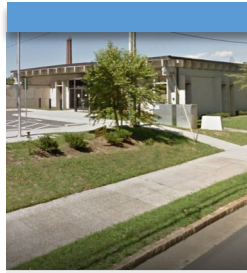
# WSPD District Offices



## District 1 Complex

7836 North Point Blvd.  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106

**Captain**  
G. E. Jenkins  
[gjenkins@wspd.org](mailto:gjenkins@wspd.org)  
336-773-7802



## District 2 Complex

1539 Waughtown Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27107

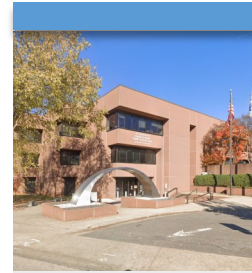
**Captain**  
Crystal Pritchard  
[cpritchard@wspd.org](mailto:cpritchard@wspd.org)  
336-773-7809



## District 3 Complex

2393 Winterhaven Lane  
Winston-Salem, NC 27103

**Captain**  
Jamison Keltner  
[jkeltner@wspd.org](mailto:jkeltner@wspd.org)  
336-773-7807



## District 4 Complex

725 N. Cherry Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

**Captain**  
Jason Gates  
[jgates@wspd.org](mailto:jgates@wspd.org)  
336-773-7806



Nextdoor



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH  
WE LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER



Winston-Salem



Neighbors

CRIME MAPPING



Winston-Salem Crime Stoppers  
727-2800



**Winston-Salem  
Neighborhood Watch**

Visit the  
**WSNW  
Facebook  
Page**



Like  
Follow  
Share

**You are invited  
to attend the  
next monthly  
WSNW  
virtual crime  
prevention  
presentation.**



**Thursday  
Jan. 9, 2025  
7:00 p.m.**

[Click here](#)  
to preregister  
your attendance.

### Winston-Salem Neighborhood Watch Association

*Making safer communities*

[wsneighborhoodwatch.org@gmail.com](mailto:wsneighborhoodwatch.org@gmail.com)

[www.wsneighborhoodwatch.org](http://www.wsneighborhoodwatch.org)

### CONTACT WSNW to...

[Update](#) your contact information

[Register](#) for our next virtual meeting

[Submit](#) a comment, idea, or suggestion

[Unsubscribe](#) from future WSNW contact

### WSPD Neighborhood Watch Program

Officer V.C. Costner

Neighborhood Watch Coordinator

PO Box 2511, Winston-Salem, NC 27102

[vcostner@wspd.org](mailto:vcostner@wspd.org)

Phone: 336-773-7835

LexisNexis: 833-358-1743

Non-Emergency#: 336-773-7700

Crime Stoppers: 336-727-2800

Emergency-Active Crime: 911

[WSPD Crime Prevention Resources](#)



— SaferCommunities —