



What is City Watch?

"We all benefit from safer streets and the security of a strong community" – CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill

Most of us live in the communities where we work. We want to keep our community safe and secure for our own families and for others. That is what City Watch is all about.

It is a community safety program operating as a partnership between CUPE members, municipalities and local police forces. It is designed to prevent and reduce crime by encouraging municipal workers to alert police to suspicious activities they might witness while on the job.

Municipal employees work in virtually every corner of their communities, pruning trees, cutting grass, fixing potholes, repairing water mains or cleaning the streets. They work in parks, back alleys, recreation facilities and on the streets. Their work makes them intimately familiar with the communities they serve.

Most crimes are committed during the day when people are at work. That is when our members are on the job, keeping alert and aware of what is going on around us. It is a community service at no extra cost provided by CUPE members.

Schools are one of the many areas where City Watch can be of assistance. Extra sets of eyes watching out for the safety of school children could help prevent needless anguish. Children's safety is everyone's concern.

Reporting activities that appear to be criminal or even suspicious can be done from municipal vehicles. In City Watch communities, workers have recovered stolen vehicles, assisted accident and heart attack victims, and reported a variety of criminal activities.



Kamloops city workers (Local 900) at the launch of City Watch.

Some successes have been dramatic. In Richmond, a City Watch worker saved the life of a woman drowning in the Fraser River. In Ladysmith, members transported the B.C. Ambulance Service by 4 X 4 to a woman with a broken ankle stranded on a mountain trail.

While such dramatic events are unusual, there is a comfort to the community in knowing that workers are keeping their eyes and ears open for unusual activity and reporting it.

Bringing City Watch to communities

City Watch programs are initiated by CUPE local unions who want to work closely with their councils and local police to bring the service to their communities. Commitment from and involvement by both the Council and the police are critical to the successful implementation of the program.

The local will provide background information as to how the program has been developed in other communities. However, each community customizes training and deployment of the program to best fit its needs.

In one community the RCMP conducted a full day of training for city workers. In several communities, the local, working with municipal managers, arranged a short training session at a regular crew meeting. In another, the police and Council determined that written materials and an awareness campaign were the most appropriate way to implement the program.

However the training is delivered, our members will learn how to report crimes and suspicious activity. The RCMP or police can teach workers what to watch for, how to record their observations, how to report an incident and what records to keep of incidents.

How City Watch works

A City Watch binder is placed in every municipal vehicle. The binder includes a brief description of the program, some advice on creating a safer community (including examples of suspicious activity to watch for), how to identify a suspect, a suspect identity form and an incident record. It could also include a city map or emergency first aid tips. CUPE invites you to take a look at some examples – they are attached at the back of this kit.

In Kamloops, daily and weekly police reports on locations of break-ins, vandalism, missing people, etc., are placed in the binders. In Victoria, CUPE members, the Insurance Corp. of B.C. (ICBC) and the RCMP work together to recover stolen vehicles. Workers are given up-to-date “hot sheets” on licence plates to watch.

Most municipal vehicles are equipped with a radio. If suspicious activities or stolen vehicles or accidents are observed, city workers call central dispatch. The dispatcher then calls the police or other emergency services, depending on the circumstances. Or, the worker may directly contact emergency services if equipped with a cell phone. Incident reports and suspect identification sheets are filled out, as appropriate, and any further required action is taken.

The process is simple, direct and effective.

City Watch logo

The City Watch logo is an important part of the program. CUPE workers are very proud to be identified with a program that enhances community safety. And when citizens see the City Watch logo on a sign or on a city vehicle or read a City Watch brochure, they have one more reason to feel secure and cared for in their community. That citizen appreciation benefits CUPE, municipal council and the police. In this kit, you will find some samples of materials that include the City Watch logo.

For more information

Contact your CUPE local or the CUPE BC office *at 604-291-9119 or visit www.cupe.bc.ca.*

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