



**NEIGHBORHOOD  
WATCH and  
OPERATIONS  
SECURITY**

**Presented by the  
Operations Security Professionals' Association  
(OSPA)**



# Introduction

As a resident in The Springs, you are vital to its security. Without neighbors watching out for each other, crime could hit close to home.

You may not think so, but everyone in your neighborhood should be looking out for each other's security and safety.

It's the neighborly thing to do.



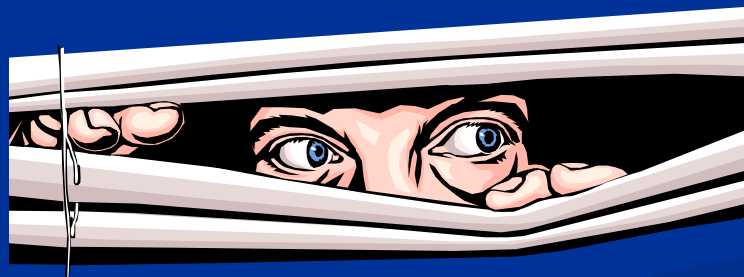


**What Is Operations Security?**

**And, why is it important to you  
and this neighborhood?**



## Operations Security is “OPSEC” And, OPSEC is . . . .



... keeping strangers, potential criminals or thieves from learning about YOURS and YOUR NEIGHBORS' personal information.

Operations Security deals with what we call sensitive information; and, as the name suggests, it can help protect you, your family and your other neighbors.



## Recent Incidents!

- During the past several days, we have had several cars in The Spring broken into and looted.
- The police representative to the Stone Oak POA indicated that, while car break-ins were down in the Stone Oak shopping areas, they were on the increase in gated communities.
- The thieves are apparently dropped off at night in front of a gated community, get through the gate, break into a car, and picked up outside the gate.
- This is too close to home for comfort!



## some words we use when we talk OPSEC:

- **Critical Information** – Specific facts about your activities and personal information concerning you and your family
  - Bank statement showing your account number and your current balance
  - Credit cards with the pin written down so you won't forget
  - Post-its to remind you when a service company is coming to your house
- **Indicators** – Any activity that seems innocent but could identify that critical information
  - You throw your bank statement in the trash and it goes out for pickup every Sat.
  - You leave your garage door cracked so pets are free to roam
- **Vulnerabilities** – weaknesses that someone can exploit to obtain critical information
  - Your bank statement is available to anyone willing to sort through your trash
  - You keep high value items in your car in plain sight
  - Setting your alarm when you leave the house empty is too much trouble, so you don't do it.



## some words we use when we talk OPSEC:

- **Risk** – the probability that someone can use that critical information to your or your neighbors' detriment
  - You could now become a victim of identity theft , your bank balance is gone and your account is overdrawn.
  - Replacing stolen credit cards, license, and other personal items is not easy
  - Replacing money that has been stolen is next to impossible
- **Countermeasures** – things you can do to stop others from obtaining *Critical Information* about you and your family
  - Lock your car
  - Keep your garage door closed when you're not using it
  - Carry only those credit cards you really need
  - Shred all paper documents with your names and personal info on them



## Why Neighborhood “OPSEC?”

There are many people who would love to have information about your personal property, your high value items, your bank accounts, your credit cards, whether or not you lock your car at night, what you do, where you go and when.

They will try to get it from you, a family member, friends, and neighbors, your home computer and even from your trash.

A determined person can collect 80-90% of the information they need from openly available sources such as bills or packages you throw in the trash, watching your activities, searching web sites you visit or getting you to respond to phishing e-mails.

And, who are those “people?”



They could be anyone and they could be  
anywhere:

- Service personnel (coming to your house or someone else's)
- Sales people (authorized or unauthorized)
- Utility workers (on service call in the neighborhood)
- Sanitation people (picking up your trash and recyclables)
- Delivery Truck drivers (who notice what other delivery trucks leave)
- Moving company personnel (who know about everything you own)
- Ordinary, every day, dyed-in-the-wool criminals
- Crackers (criminals who would like to get rich from hacking into your home computer)
- Phishers who send e-mails requesting you to provide personal information or enticing you to visit a fake web site.



## **OPSEC teaches you to:**

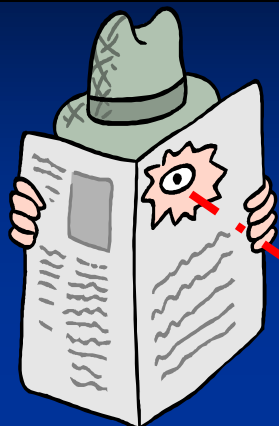
- Look at your daily activities from an stranger's point of view. What patterns are there in your daily or weekly activities?
- Understand what strangers might already know or want to know about you, your family, or your neighbors.
- Assess the amount of risk and burden that the stranger who knows this information can place on you, your family, and your neighbors.
- Apply "countermeasures" to prevent them from learning any sensitive information about you, your family, or your neighbors; and, to preclude the opportunity for them to take advantage of that information.



## OPSEC at Home:

### A possible scenario

- You just bought a new 50" plasma TV from Best Buy and had it delivered to your house by one of their big blue and yellow trucks
- You put the box outside on the front curb and it has your name and address and the price tag (\$3499) on the outside
- You normally park your cars in the driveway when you're home. Your spouse works and your kids are in school all day.
- You have timers that automatically turn the lights on in the front room every evening at 7PM and turn them off at 10PM
- You pile everyone and bag and baggage into both cars to visit friends in Corpus Christi for a long weekend and
- You didn't stop the paper, you didn't notify the post office to hold your mail before you left, and you didn't tell your neighbors



## OPSEC at Home:

### What was wrong with this picture?

- You've done some free advertising – everyone going by your house now knows you've got a new plasma TV
- You've established patterns:
  - where you park your car everyday
  - your lights still go on and off at the exact same time everyday
  - and newspapers are piling up at the front door.
- Opportunity knocks! Or, maybe his name is Freddie, a local thief who's been cruising your neighborhood; and, he didn't knock, he let himself in using the key you keep under a planter.
- And this weekend, he won't miss the Cowboys' practice game because he's watching it on your new \$3500 TV.



## OPSEC at Home:

### What should you have done?

- Let your neighbors know you'll be gone. Maybe they could park their car in your drive until you return. But, they can certainly help watch your house for you.
- Take any address labels and price tags off the TV box, break it up, leave it in your garage until the next garbage pickup or take it to a dumpster.
- Vary the timers on your lights and put one upstairs in a bedroom. Leave a radio on.
- Put a stop on the paper (can be done on-line or over the phone) or ask a neighbor to pick them up first thing in the morning.
- Send a "hold my mail" notice to the post office (card or on-line).
- And, just in case, make sure you have serial numbers of all valuable items in your house.



## Out and about with OPSEC: Avoid discussing your “sensitive” personal information in public places:

- Movie Theaters
- Restaurants
- Shopping Malls
- Airports
- Basically anyplace where someone you don't know could be listening
- The Internet (e.g., blogs, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, twitter, etc)





## OPSEC patterns ...

- If possible, take different routes to work, school, appointments, daycare, etc. Not all the time, just once in awhile
- Vary your schedule (instead of always shopping at TARGET on Wednesday, change it to a different day, or once in awhile you might shop at HEB, instead)
- Change the times you do regular daily activities (jogging, shopping, taking your children to the playground, walking your dog)
- Destroy credit card receipts, billing statements, or other mail with personal information on it (invest in a shredder!)
- Take address labels off magazines and papers before you put them in recycling



## And... What OPSEC can you, as a friend and neighbor do?

- Friends and neighbors should understand the importance of keeping a close hold on what is told to them. If your neighbor tells you about going away for a few days, or about a recent purchase of a high value item, or where they hide a spare house key, it's a good common sense not to mention it to someone who doesn't live in The Springs
- Keeping an eye on their house while they're not around is being neighborly. Let them know if strangers have been to their house
- If they forgot to stop the paper and the mail, you can pick it up for them
- If UPS or FEDEX leaves a package while they're gone, you could keep it in your house until they return
- Wouldn't you expect they'd do the same for you?



## In conclusion

OSPA's goal has been to provide you with a slightly better understanding of YOUR importance with helping your neighborhood maintain good security. This briefing was not intended to make you paranoid or suspicious that every stranger you see could be a thief. **But always be alert...** if any stranger shows undue interest in a house or family in your neighborhood, especially when no one is home: take note! If it looks suspicious call the police and *let that neighbor know!*

## Practice good OPSEC at home.