

January, 2012

2011 Neighborhood Watch Program Newsletter Notes

The following information is a synopsis of Neighborhood Watch Program notes written for the BellaVita newsletter in 2011. Hopefully it will serve as a refresher for those who read it originally and as an aid to residents who may be reading it for the first time. Some of the information may be a little “dated” for use in 2012 and in some cases the wording was revised to bring the suggestion up to date and still may be helpful.

A Car Accident

Early in 2011 a BellaVita resident had a minor car accident at the corner of Scarsdale and Beamer. As required, pertinent information of name, address and insurance coverage was exchanged between drivers.

The lady that caused the accident stated that since the accident was minor, no one was injured and that both cars were drivable that her husband would just write a check for the damage. She also requested no insurance company involvement and ultimately was allowed to leave the scene without a police report being filed.

Rethinking the matter, the lady that was not at fault called the police to obtain an official document of the incident. A Precinct 2 Constable responded and said he could not intervene and/or file a report since an agreement between the parties had been reached.

The point of this note is to alert drivers to avoid possible “he-said, she-said” involvement and the hassle of possible non-payment for your loss, a police report should always be obtained for official documentation of the facts on any car accident no matter how little damage occurs. Make sure all persons involved in the accident remain at the collision site. Of course common sense prevails and any injured persons must be transported as necessary.

Early Darkness

Fall is approaching and there is less and less daylight for residents to visually observe their surroundings. (As this document is being written, we are in winter of the year but the information is still valid). Also, the drought caused animals in the surrounding woods to leave their habitat in search of food and water. To protect ourselves from the unwanted arrival of critters, both two and four legged alike, it is imperative to keep your garage doors down when not in use.

Note: After this article was written, Neighborhood Watch personnel drove through the neighborhood and saw most homes with their garage doors down. Practicing self-awareness is the best way to ensure your own well being. Good Job everybody!

Neighbor's Night Out

Tuesday October 4, 2011 was designated as Neighbor's Night Out. Traditionally in BellaVita many block parties are held in the residential streets. With that in mind, it was imperative that we all took special precautions driving our vehicles, being observant for persons walking in the street and bike riding persons. Special thanks goes to Pearland Police Department Community Service Officer Michael Pace, Pearland EMTs, Precinct 2 Constables and other dignitaries that attended. Hopefully a good time was had by all.

Please note that Officer Pace is available to inspect your home which may entitle you to an insurance savings. He is also in charge of the Pearland Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association. You are encouraged to avail yourself of both of these worthwhile functions. Officer Pace can be reached at 281.997.4171 and welcomes your call.

Computer Security

In this day and age of technology most every home has a computer. We use them for e-mail, banking, facebook, games, and other uses. Please be reminded not to save sensitive information on your hard drive. Do not post anything sensitive that you are not sure is on a secured website. There are scammers out there that can

use spyware to monitor your every keystroke if you don't have the proper computer protection. Banking on line is generally secure but posting through e-mail, facebook, and other correspondence and saved on your harddrive can be vulnerable. Make sure any website you use is secure by seeing the lock icon on your toolbar. If you would have to take your machine into a company for repair, in some cases repair personnel may be able to access your harddrive and retrieve sensitive information you have entered. So, don't post phone numbers, bank codes, kids names, social security numbers or anything else on an unsecured website or save any similar information on your harddrive that an unscrupulous repair person might be able to access. Identity theft nowadays is a big problem. Do not be a victim.

Lake Fishing

With warmer weather approaching more fishermen will be using our lake. Remember, only residents or their guests may use these facilities and unless the visitor is over 19 years of age and has an official guest pass in his/her possession, the resident must remain on site with the guest. Keep a watchful eye on youngsters since the concrete lining the lake could be slick from rain, dew, algae or other means.

Signs indicating no trespassing have been installed and warn unauthorized persons they are not allowed to fish in our lake.

The Pearland Police patrol our subdivision and if you are in doubt as to a fisherman's authority to be here the police will respond if you call 281.997.4100. Do not approach unauthorized fishermen yourself. Please remember also that a "catch and release" policy is in effect for any and all fish catches. No trespassing is in effect for everybody on the area by the waterfall between the two lakes.

Pets

There were two incidents in 2011 of smaller animals being attacked by a larger predator. The outcome was tragic so be aware! Do not allow your pets to be unsupervised even in your own backyard. This is especially important for

residents on the fringe of the neighborhood where your backyard is adjacent to the woods.

Note: In early 2012 an unwanted goose has returned to the lake area and is very territorial. Be cautious when it approaches. We don't know of any "special" way to chase it from your vicinity.

Soliciting

A sign, indicating we have private streets and no soliciting is permitted in BellaVita, has been posted at the front gate. Since our area is gated and considered private, even though a person has a permit from the city, if the soliciting person knocks at your door attempting to make a sale, that person is still in violation of the law. You always have the option of calling the police. Note: It is not a violation for solicitors i.e. lawn service personnel etc. to just put their notices on your door.

Walkers and Bike Riders

Daylight saving time ended November 6, 2011., which means more morning light and less evening light but with winter approaching – less daylight all around. With that in mind, walkers and bike riders are less visible to motorized vehicle drivers. Please follow established guidelines of walkers facing the traffic on roadways and bicyclers riding with the flow of traffic. Please make sure you have reflective marking on your clothing and bicycles. Safety is first and foremost!

Vehicle Identification

After purchasing a home in BellaVita, new residents are given an orientation package about entry gate operation, swimming pool hours and other need-to-know information concerning BellaVita residency. Included in the orientation package are car identification stickers that should be placed on the inside of the windshield just above the car registration/inspection stickers issued by the state. These stickers help identify the vehicle as "belonging" in BellaVita. Vehicles without the stickers such as those belonging to trespassing fishermen, unwanted solicitors and other non-residents can more easily be identified if each BellaVita

does have an identifying sticker on his/her car. Please be sure your car has this BellaVita issued sticker. Contact the clubhouse front desk for more information or to obtain stickers if needed.

Resident Input

If you see something in the neighborhood that seems “out-of-place” i.e. different than normal, please jot a note on a Resident Concern Form available in the clubhouse. These concerns are addressed at the monthly HOA Board meeting. If immediate action is warranted clubhouse personnel will notify a member of the Watch Program.

Clubhouse Issued Homeowner Directories

When you dispose of old BellaVita Homeowner’s Directories please shred them. Believe it or not, there are unscrupulous persons that look through trash for such consumer information. The information shown on that document should be only available to BellaVita residents and outsiders on a strict need-to-know basis.

Additional Stop Signs

The BellaVita HOA Board has approved the placement of new stop signs at the corners of Riviera Dr./South Capri Drive; Riviera Dr./East Capri Drive and Venice Drive/South Lago Vista Drive. These signs will be ordered and placed at the locations noted in the near future. Please be on the lookout for these signs. It is every driver’s responsibility to obey traffic laws in BellaVita the same as you would on public roadways.

Ants and Termites

Check the outside of your homes for mulch and/or dead grass piled up against the bricks of your home. Mulch piled up next to the foundation is OK but should not be touching the bricks. Termites use this as an entry way to your home. Use a rake or other objects to move this extra mulch back into your flowerbed. If they have built a nest against your foundation, they are more able to get under the siding and into your home. You may see dirt residue in a bathroom or other room.

That is a direct result of ant infestation. Use spectracide or diazinon on the ant hill to kill them but be careful of fire ant stings because they are very painful.

BellaVita Home Alarms

Your home alarm is a first defense against burglary or other outsider malfeasance. As such, you have the control and responsibility for its monitoring capabilities and usage.

The following guidelines, and in some cases – requirements, will aid in keeping you informed and your alarm system in proper working order.

Your home alarm monitoring company is Tutor Security, phone 281-452-6323.

They monitor your alarm system 24/7 and can answer many of your questions on this subject. They are the company that calls your home and/or other contacts when your alarm goes off. They also dispatch the police if they are not satisfied with the answers they receive when they call to verify the alarm going off i.e., the person doesn't remember their password, they can't reach anybody on your call list, etc.

Tutor Security works in conjunction with Modern Systems Co. Modern Systems Co. is the company to call for repair service when your system is not working properly. They are also the company that handles your alarm contact information. (Names you have told them to call if your alarm goes off and they can't reach you).

The following recommendations should be implemented each year to ensure your alarm is working properly and you are up-to-date on other aspects of your home alarm system.

Alarm Testing

1. Call Tutor Security at 281-452-6323 and tell them you want to verify that your alarm is working properly.
2. They will ask for your Name, Address and Password.
3. They will instruct you to hang up, activate the system then open a door to set-off the alarm.
4. You must then call them back to see if they received the alarm signal.
5. If everything worked properly, you will probably have to reset the system by activating then deactivating it.
6. Any questions can be directed to the operator at Tutor Security.

Contact Verification and/or Repairs

To change names on your contact list or get system repairs:

Modern Systems

3115 North Fry Road Suite 404

Katy, Texas 77449

Phone 281-599-7388

E-mail: AKOKOSKIE@ModernSys.com

It is recommended that each household verify and update their emergency call list if necessary.

As noted above, this is the list of people and phone numbers you authorized the alarm company to contact in case you could not be reached. Changes may need to be made if your current call list contains persons that have moved, changed phone numbers or are otherwise unavailable to provide alarm call information for your particular residence. To change this information, you must know your password or be able to verify names/numbers given to Modern originally. Changes to your contact list must be made in writing through either U.S. postal mail or e-mail to Moderns Systems Co. at the above address.

Modification

When originally constructed, all BellaVita homes were installed with smoke alarms. Please note, as originally installed, THESE SMOKE ALARMS ARE NOT MONITORED BY ANY OUTSIDE SERVICE. Presently, the smoke alarms are in your home to alert you, when you are present in the home, of existing smoke and possible fire. To modify your smoke alarms for away-from-home monitoring you must contact Modern Systems Co. at 281-599-7388. As of October 11, 2010, the modification cost for each smoke alarm is \$90. In addition, there is an installation labor charge of \$65 an hour.

Registration

All residents MUST have their alarm system registered with the Pearland Police Department.

Effective May 1, 2010 the City of Pearland requires the registration of individual home alarms. Even if you registered prior to this date that registration is invalid. Per the City Ordinance No. 569-3 effective May 1, 2010, among other instructions, the following excerpts pertain.

Section 20-21 Registration Permits “No person shall operate, cause to be operated or permit the operation of an alarm system or fire alarm unless a current registration permit has been issued by the City for such system”.

Section 20-22 Registration Application “The City must be notified in writing within seventy-two (72) hours of any changes or modifications, such as new owners or persons to notify in case of alarm activation”.

Section 20-25 Testing of Equipment “No person shall conduct any test or demonstration of an alarm without first notifying the City by contacting the telephone number on the alarm permit application”.

Section 20-26 Penalties “Operation of an alarm system or fire alarm without a permit is an offense. Each day an alarm is operated without a permit shall constitute a separate offense”.

Section 20-31 Effective Date “The requirement to register all alarm systems installed within the City and other provisions of this article will become effective May 1, 2010”.

Residential Permit Fee: Combination Burglar, Hold-Up/Panic, Fire Alarm Permit is \$15.00.

Permit Duration: 12 Months

Fines: There is no fine for the first three (3) false alarms.

4th & 5th False Alarm: Fine is \$50.00 each

6th & 7th False Alarm Fine is \$75.00 each

8th or more False Alarm Fine is \$100.00 each

Checks, money orders, or cashier checks and the registration form may be mailed or delivered to:

City of Pearland

3523 Liberty Drive

Pearland, Texas 77581

Attn: Permit Department

or

Pearland Police Department

2555 Cullen Parkway

Pearland, Texas 77581

Attn: False Alarm Reduction Unit

Contacts

Contact information for forms and/or other questions may be directed to:

*Pearland Police Department – False Alarm Reduction Unit –

281-997-4315

*Tutor Security (Alarm Monitoring Company)

281-452-6323

*Modern Systems Co. (Alarm Repair Company)

281-599-7388

*Bob Stockinger (BellaVita Neighborhood Watch, Project Manager)

281-481-0061

(Hint: I might be beneficial to put these numbers into your cell phone call list in case you would need them when you are away from home).

Alarm System Batteries

The alarm system in your home has a backup battery installed in the alarm control box. This battery (not to be confused with individual smoke alarm batteries) is provided in case you would lose electrical power in your home due to a thunder storm or other cause. The battery has a normal usable life of approximately five (5) years. If your battery is beginning to fail you will be notified by Tutor Security and the red power light on your control panel, located at the back door or inside your bedroom, will be blinking. Again, this battery is a backup to your electrical system but should be replaced when it fails.

Here is how to “repair” your system without having to call for outside service. Locate the alarm control box usually found in a back bedroom closet. Pull the door open and locate the battery. The battery is black, about 3x3 inches square. It has a red terminal (+), and a negative terminal (-). Disconnect the two wires, be sure to remember which is the positive terminal and negative terminal because the new battery must be connected exactly the same way as the old one. Take the battery to Radio Shack for replacement, they cost about \$35.00. You want to be sure to buy the correct size. Reconnect the new battery but you will notice the red power light on the control panel is still flashing. This light should quit blinking and glow solid red after 36 hours. If the light still blinks red after 36 hours you will have to reset your system by arming and then setting off your alarm. This procedure was explained in prior correspondence to the homeowners. If needed, here are the phone numbers to Tutor Security (monitor) 281.452.6323 and

Modern Systems (repair) 281.599.7388. Either company will be able to talk you through the resetting process.

Smoke Alarms – Smoke Alarm Batteries

Your home has two separate and distinct “alert systems”. The alarm system regulated through the control boxes in your bedroom and at the back door is one system and the other system is your smoke alarms. Unless your smoke alarms have been modified, they are for home/personal safety protection when you are at home. Smoke alarms are not monitored by an outside company unless professionally modified by an outside company. (See the “Modification” paragraph included under BellaVita Home Alarms in this report).

Recent documentation received from the Pearland Police Department recommends replacing smoke alarms every 8-10 years. The decision to replace home smoke alarms is strictly up to the homeowner at their expense.

Batteries in the smoke alarms should be replaced twice yearly. Recommended times are the seasonal date changes – June 21 and December 21. Previously daylight saving time dates were used but these dates vary from year to year.

TRAFFIC AND POLICE AUTHORITY

Much discussion has been made on the subject of police authority in BellaVita. Of course, without saying, the Texas/Pearland laws can be very intricate to understand. Crimes against persons and property are within the authority of police investigation at all times. Traffic wise the following three areas are within police jurisdiction and residents can be ticketed for non-compliance. Vehicles must contain proof of liability insurance, persons can be ticketed for DWI and citations can be issued for illegal handicapped parking violations. Speeding and running stop signs are not within police jurisdictions.

Front Gate Operations

There are four operational methods to enter the subdivision when the gates are closed. Each homeowner is responsible to equip their automobile(s) for proper

entry. The first method is the city issued E-Z tag. The tag must be programmed by clubhouse personnel for compatibility with the BellaVita gates. The second method is through use of the issued "clicker". The third method is with the use of the four digit code you were given by clubhouse personnel. The last method for entry is to call a friend or neighbor in the subdivision who can buzz you through the gate. Now is a good time to test your clicker to ensure the battery is charged and to find the four digit code you were issued. It is a good idea to keep the code number written down in your console and likewise keep the clicker handy. Please be observant of the stop sign requirements at the gates. Oncoming traffic has the right of way at this intersection and every car should use their signals to relay their turning intentions.

IRIS

IRIS, the mechanized system by which all residents can be notified of dangers, e.g. gas leaks, freeze damage through e-mail or by telephone, is still in negotiations of a new contract by AMI. When the contract is complete all residents will be notified and the means for joining into the system will be disseminated. As of this writing no other information is known.

Forms

Included with this packet are forms for use as necessary. Other forms and information on many subjects are available on the website.