

# Unsung Heroes

## Trash Collectors: Watching Out For More Than Garbage

(NAPSA)—Trash collectors are critical to more than keeping the community's environment clean and healthy. Solid waste companies also play an important role in keeping neighborhoods safe—trash collectors often act as additional “eyes and ears” for neighborhood watch efforts.

### Here's How

The nature of trash collection presents a unique opportunity to be on the watch. Because they generally cover the same routes every day, these men and women become quite familiar with their neighborhoods and can easily spot trouble. What's more, they're usually at work during times of the day when crimes are likely to occur.

While trash collectors aren't police—they can't chase down criminals or make arrests—they can and often do report unusual or suspicious activity to law enforcement.

Until recently, this type of partnership was mostly informal. Trash collectors simply saw an opportunity to do the right thing and called the police to report automobile accidents, fires or suspected criminal activity, often long before they otherwise would have been detected.

### Making It Official

Recently, however, many police officials recognized an opportunity to work directly with solid waste companies to design formal neighborhood watch programs.

The two largest solid waste companies, Waste Management and Republic Services, each have programs in which collectors are trained to report emergencies and



**The next time you see the trash collector, you may care to thank him or her for helping to keep the community safe as well as clean.**

suspicious activity to their dispatchers, who pass the information on to authorities. Waste Management has trained and certified more than 2,500 drivers to be on the lookout and even won the Neighborhood Watch Award from the National Sheriffs' Association.

Smaller companies also have similar programs. Rumpke, an Ohio-based company, has been recognized for its drivers' many contributions to community safety, from assisting the elderly to helping locate discarded evidence in a criminal investigation to helping identify illegal drug activity.

These kinds of activities demonstrate how critically important solid waste companies are to keeping communities healthy, clean and safe.

### Learn More

For more information, visit [www.environmentalistseveryday.org](http://www.environmentalistseveryday.org).