

Cerritos

Neighborhood Watch Report

July 2002

Attend the National Night Out on August 6

Neighborhood Watch members are encouraged to participate in a National Night Out program on August 6 with the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center. National Night Out will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at Cerritos Park East, Liberty Park and Heritage Park

community centers, plus Friendship, Sunshine, Westgate and Frontier neighborhood parks.

Sheriff's deputies will provide information on homeland security, earthquake preparedness, safety tips and the Neighborhood Watch and Volunteers on Patrol programs.

Watch Captains to meet August 28

A Neighborhood Watch Block Captains' meeting is set for 7 p.m. on August 28 at the Cerritos Senior Center at Pat Nixon Park, 12340 South Street. Sheriff's deputies will provide a crime update.

Hardening the Target

Vigilance + Preparedness = Homeland Security

While the Office of Homeland Security is a newly formed department of the federal government with numerous employees, enormous tasks, and a complex structure, the concept of homeland security when applied to the local level may be summed up in two words: vigilance and preparedness.

It is essential that residents consider the security of their homes, neighborhoods, and community.

Neighborhood Watch is a highly successful program that has been active in Cerritos for more than 20 years. As the extended "eyes and ears" of law enforcement, local residents, without question, are the frontline defense against criminal activity. Familiarity with what is normal and what is not in our neighborhoods is the key. Being alert and aware of the usual routines in your neighborhood helps you spot anything out of place. Unfamiliar people and vehicles should be placed under observation. Note vehicle descriptions and license plate numbers. Take what you hear seriously. If someone brags or talks about harming people or claims to be a member of a subversive group, report it immedi-

ately to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044.

Be alert when you are in a place where large groups of people tend to congregate. Unattended packages, briefcases and bags should be brought to the attention of authorities at once. By maintaining this vigilance and acting on your knowledge and your instincts, the Sheriff's Department can investigate suspicious behavior or circumstances.

Federal, state, and local agencies have all increased their focus on emergency preparedness within the last year. There have been county-wide and City drills to better acquaint personnel on the appropriate procedures to follow in the event of a major incident.

The Sheriff's Department Volunteers on Patrol assigned to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station have been receiving additional training in response and assessment should a catastrophic incident occur. Most live a very short distance from Cerritos Sheriff's Station and can be rapidly deployed in a non-enforcement capacity, thus freeing deputies to better perform their frontline duties.

Given this emphasis, a critical component in the successful endurance of any major disaster is the individual preparation of each household. The most likely event that we will be faced with is an earthquake that will affect several communities over a widespread area. Resources will be strained and each family should be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. Store 1 gallon of water each day per person, food that will not spoil and does not require cooking, medicines, a first-aid kit, battery-powered radio, cellular phone, flashlight, extra batteries, blankets, toilet paper and garbage bags.

If you and your family are prepared for an earthquake, you will be ready for situations that fall under the category of homeland security.

We as a nation find ourselves in a position that many other countries have lived with for years. We are not immune from acts of terrorism, but we will not live in constant fear either. With heightened awareness of our surroundings (vigilance), and taking the appropriate steps to endure (preparedness), we need not compromise our wonderful quality of life.

Monthly Crime Summary: June 2002

Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center recorded a total of 192 Part I crimes during the month of June 2002. So far this year, there has been a reduction of nearly 5 percent in this category from the same period last year. Sixty of these cases were misdemeanors (lesser crimes). Cerritos deputies responded to an average of 385 calls for service per week. The increase in service calls is typical as the activity of patrol deputies traditionally increases in summer.

Seven robbery related incidents occurred in June. On June 4, at approximately 1:30 p.m., a woman exited a bus near 195th Street and Pioneer Boulevard. A male and female wrestled a purse from her grip as she walked. The purse was recovered quickly and the female suspect arrested. Another purse was snatched from a woman in a retail lot on June 5 and found abandoned.

Two suspects were quickly arrested after struggling with a merchant in a botched shoplifting attempt on June 7. An alleged robbery attempt occurred late on June 16 near Carmenita Road and the 91 Freeway. The victim (admitting to being intoxicated) said that a knife-wielding suspect had confronted him and demanded money. The victim told deputies that he refused to relinquish his cash and began to struggle with the suspect and ultimately sustained a small laceration to his arm. Detectives are currently attempting to validate his account.

On June 20 at 2 p.m., a suspect reached into a vehicle over a victim and removed a purse that had just been placed on a seat after the woman left a local store. A victim reported being followed by another motorist in a retail parking lot on June 24 at approximately 6:30 p.m. After she parked, she was approached by the passenger of the other vehicle who had simulated that he was in possession of a gun. A demand was made for the keys to the victim's vehicle and the suspect

drove off. The vehicle was later recovered intact in a nearby jurisdiction due to a tracking device.

The final incident was commercial robbery on June 26, at a bank near Gridley Road and South Street. Two suspects fled with an undisclosed amount of cash. As recommended in past issues of the "Watch Report," it is important to constantly be aware of your surroundings. If you believe that you are being followed or observed, curtail your intended activities and get to a location where there are as many people as possible. If you are driving, do not stop until you have reached a Sheriff's or police station, or in hours of darkness, a well-lighted and heavily occupied lot. Sound your horn to attract attention. Street robbery suspects are in a hurry and do not like to attract attention in the form of potential witnesses. If you are the victim of a robbery, NEVER resist, and give up any property that is demanded right away. Unlike property, your life cannot be replaced.

There were 15 reported incidents of residential burglary in June. This figure reflects a reduction of over 20 percent from the same period in the year 2001. The property taken in these crimes consistently involved jewelry, cash, audio/video components, and computer equipment. The majority of the homes were entered by prying a sliding glass door or window from the tracks. This is a very common method and can be greatly reduced, if not completely eliminated, by use of locking pins that secure the window to the frame. In three cases burglars gained access through open garage doors. In one break-in, the owner's vehicle had been recently burglarized and the garage remote control taken. It was this remote that allowed the burglar(s) to easily enter and remove property. If your remote control is lost or stolen, make sure that you unplug the automatic opener and manually operate the door until your code can be changed.

Two burglaries were thwarted in

June when alarm systems were activated, and no loss was incurred. You are most likely to be a victim of a residential burglary during daytime hours. Be wary of solicitors going door-to-door and don't be afraid to ask them for a City permit. A common method to determine if anyone is inside the residence is for the would-be burglar to ring your doorbell for a few moments. If you do not want to answer the door to a stranger (which is a wise choice), make some type of noise to let the person know that the home is occupied. Call Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044 to report any suspicious person(s) right away.

Thirty-eight vehicle burglaries were reported in June. This is lower than the two previous months. Nationally, vehicle burglaries have increased from figures recorded in recent years. High-volume parking lots are the most common location, but an increasing amount of vehicle burglaries are being reported in residential areas. These incidents usually happen between the hours of 12 a.m. and 5 a.m. The main cause of these crimes is visible items within the passenger compartment that attract thieves. Your ability to secure a car in a residential area relies mainly on a safe place to protect it, such as a locked garage. Make a concerted effort to provide space in your garage for this purpose. If you absolutely must park outside, purchase and install a motion activated floodlight in your driveway.

Lastly, auto theft cases were recorded at 28 in the month of June. Overall, they have been reduced nearly 14 percent over the same period in 2001. As reported with vehicle burglaries, auto theft has also gone up nationally compared to previous years. Statistics show that Hondas and Toyotas are the cars most frequently reported stolen, with other Japanese import products close behind. Steering wheel locks help prevent auto thefts and should especially be used if you own a Honda or Toyota.

Safety Contacts:
Community Safety Division -
(562) 916-1266
Sheriff's Station - (562) 860-0044



To join Cerritos Neighborhood Watch, call Community Mobilization Officer Mike Yach at (562) 916-1258.