

Cerritos

Neighborhood

Watch Report

June 2002

National Night Out program planned

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center will be participating in a National Night Out program on August 6.

National Night Out is designed to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness; generate support for,

and participation in, local anti-crime programs; strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships; and send a message to criminals that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back against crime.

National Night Out is an annual event. Last year more than 9,000 communities in 50 states participated. More news about Cerritos' participation in the program will be provided in the July issue of the "Neighborhood Watch Report."

Hardening the Target

Secure your home while you're away on vacation

Vacations seem synonymous with summer. The kids are out of school, the time off of work that you had put in for months ago has finally arrived, and the weather couldn't be nicer. But packing the suitcase or the car should not be the only major preparation made before you are off on your journey. What about the security of your residence in your absence?

Some of us are fortunate enough to arrange for a "house sitter" to occupy our home while we are away. This continual "lived in" status makes the home a tougher target for the would-be burglar as the day-to-day care of the house is maintained. For those of us that must leave our homes unoccupied, a few security and safety measures need to be addressed.

You do not want to publicize the fact that you are away. Stop the delivery of your mail and newspaper to keep these items from accumulating. Reliance on a friend, relative, or a neighbor to handle these chores consistently is a must because even one day missed will offer the telltale signs that nobody is home.

Lawn maintenance and lighting in hours of darkness are also crucial factors to consider. If you have a lawn service, maintain the regular schedule or make the necessary plans for this to be accomplished in your absence. Keep your sprinkler system on a timed cycle for appearance purposes. Lights should be timed to simulate that the home is being used as normal. Alternate the interior and exterior lights for maximum effectiveness.

Lock doors and windows

NEVER leave any windows or doors unlocked or partially open. Use deadbolt locks in doors and locking pins in all sliding glass doors and windows. This keeps the frame intact which makes it very difficult if not impossible to pry the window from the track.

If you have a dog on the premises, or an alarm system, your chances of being burglarized are drastically reduced. Dogs, regardless of size, tend to attract attention when they bark. Alarms attract Sheriff's deputies when they are activated. Alarm systems can cost less than \$30 per month to main-

tain, and are monitored 24 hours a day.

Arrange for a free vacation security check

Finally, by simply making a phone call to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center at (562) 860-0044, by coming in personally, or by visiting the City's web site at www.ci.cerritos.ca.us, you can initiate vacation checks of your home by Sheriff's Volunteers on Patrol (VOPs). This service is free of charge, and the VOPs will leave you a concealed notice of service when first visited, and then log each subsequent check on station records that are used as a means of tracking. Also, you will be asked to provide a contact person in the event that something needs attention at your home. If you are seeking this form on the web site, select the links to "City Services" and "Sheriff's Station".

By taking a few precautions and making some arrangements before you leave, you will be able to return to the home as you had left it. What a perfect end to a summer vacation adventure.

Monthly Crime Summary: May 2002

Cerritos Sheriff's Station recorded a total of 184 Part I crimes (mostly felonies) during the month of May 2002. So far this year, there has been a reduction of more than 8 percent in this category from the same period last year. Nearly 60 of these cases were misdemeanors (or lesser crimes), a figure matched last month. Cerritos deputies responded to an average of 337 calls for service per week.

Six robbery-related incidents occurred in May. On May 10, at approximately 6:30 p.m., a motorized scooter was taken from a victim after he was pushed from it near Studebaker Road and 195th Street. A donut shop was robbed on May 12 at 5 a.m. near South Street and Bloomfield Avenue. In the area of Claretta Avenue and Del Amo Boulevard, a vehicle pulled beside two pedestrians close to midnight on May 13. Both victims ran away when an unknown object was displayed. A lone gunman took cash from a closing business late at night on May 16 near Del Amo Boulevard and Pioneer Boulevard.

Detectives are also investigating a report about a victim who had returned home and drove into his garage when an individual approached from the driveway. The stranger fled when the driver began sounding the car horn and closed the garage door. Finally, at 2:50 a.m. on May 27, a security guard was held up while guarding an upcoming "lot sale" off of Alondra Boulevard near the 605 Freeway.

Awareness of your surroundings is crucial in avoiding many of these situations. Remember, if you feel that you are being followed while driving your car, make a couple of turns to see if the following vehicle also turns. If so, drive to the nearest Sheriff's or police station or a well-lighted business where there are many people.

Pedestrians should take note of all activity going on around them.

Regardless of whether you are walking, using an ATM, or even stopped at a red light, don't be afraid to make eye contact as this displays confidence and makes you appear to be a more difficult target.

There were 16 reported incidents of residential burglary in May. The property taken in these crimes consistently involved jewelry, cash, audio/video components and computer equipment. Three of these incidents involved homes that were being tented for fumigation. While most residential burglaries occur during daytime hours, tented homes are obviously unoccupied and may be burglarized at night, or shortly after the tent is removed. The majority of the other homes were entered by prying a sliding glass door or window from the tracks. This is a very common method that burglars use and can be greatly reduced, if not completely eliminated, by use of locking pins that secure the window to the frame. When a burglar alarm is installed, entry is usually not completed. Many systems are available for under \$30 per month, and are equipped with motion detectors and perimeter contacts on windows and doors. (If your home is not occupied during the day or for long periods of time, Sheriff's deputies strongly recommend installation of a burglar alarm.)

In two additional incidents, suspects were arrested and others identified after random "door knocking" was used to determine if the homes were occupied. This is the reason that calling the Sheriff's Department to report suspicious activity or what can appear to be an illegal peddler is so important. Burglars have been known to pose as solicitors, and if they are in fact doing legitimate business, proper permits from the City are required. By allowing deputies to contact the solicitor, their legitimacy can be

ascertained. We are pleased to report that the burglary rate in Cerritos is down over 25 percent compared to that of last year. Most of this is due to alert citizen reporting and residents taking steps to make themselves less vulnerable.

Forty-five vehicle burglaries were reported in May, down nearly 5 percent from May 2001. In the first two weeks of the month, there was an equal split between thefts from residential streets and from high-volume parking lots. The main cause of these crimes was items visible within the passenger compartment that attracted thieves.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department recently made arrests of a band of thieves targeting fitness center parking lots. The thieves found that victims had been leaving valuables under car seats to avoid securing them inside fitness center lockers. These suspects were particularly interested in personal information and credit cards which they used to commit credit card frauds and identity thefts. The fitness centers/clubs within Cerritos have reported vehicle burglaries and locker break-ins. We strongly recommend that you leave wallets and purses at home when visiting these establishments. Place your driver's license in your gym bag and only take a small amount of cash if you need to make any purchases.

If you have an expensive car stereo, parking your car in the garage at night will prevent vehicle burglary at your home.

Lastly, 20 auto theft cases were recorded in the month of May, compared to 29 in April. Overall, they have been reduced nearly 15 percent over the same period in 2001. Statistics continue to show that the large majority of stolen vehicles in Cerritos are mid-1990s or older model Toyotas and Hondas.



Community Safety Division: (562) 916-1266

Sheriff's Station: (562) 860-0044