

# Cerritos

## Neighborhood

### Watch Report

May 2002

#### Follow precautions to prevent auto burglary and theft

The City of Cerritos is fortunate to have fewer crimes against the person (robbery, rape, aggravated assault, etc.) than most communities. Citywide statistics reveal that the two most frequently reported Part I, or felony crimes, involve the theft of a vehicle and the theft of contents from within a vehicle. If a car is locked and secured, this crime is referred to as vehicle burglary.

Cerritos offers a variety of stores that attract people from throughout the region. In addition, Cerritos is the home of many businesses and a major entertainment center. While many gravitate to these places for legitimate purposes, thieves also find the associated high-volume lots a prime location for potential targets.

The majority of auto thefts and burglaries occur in these parking lots, but there have been recent weeks where vehicle burglaries were equally reported on residential streets. Property left in plain sight inside of a car like cellular telephones, laptop computers, purses, briefcases, tools, and high-end stereo components are among the

#### Hardening the



#### Target

items that are most frequently reported as stolen. These goods are appealing to the car burglar no matter where your vehicle is parked, and should be stored in the trunk BEFORE you park.

Thieves are observant and can watch exactly what you place in your trunk before you leave your car unattended. In high-volume lots, there is a great deal of foot traffic, and it may be very difficult to differentiate between an honest citizen and one with less than honorable intentions. Consider taking certain valuables with you such as your purse, cellular telephone, etc.

Most of the reported vehicle burglaries involve entry by smashing or prying a window, or disabling a lock. Another method is to use a modified or "shaved" key that allows access without any visible damage. These keys are also popular with car thieves. In the event that your windows are smashed, you don't want to rely on an alarm. Car alarms will attract

attention, but are such a frequent occurrence that people tend to ignore them.

The best possible way to avoid being the victim of a car burglary or auto theft is to park your vehicle in a locked garage at night as vehicles that are burglarized in residential areas tend to occur late at night or very early in the morning. Not so in commercial lots. As reported above, the amount of people in commercial parking lots make it difficult to spot suspicious behavior. These crimes can occur at any time of the day. Victimization in these lots can be reduced by not leaving items of value in plain view of passers-by. This is the number one cause of vehicle burglaries. An auto burglar will not usually risk breaking into a car on a scavenger hunt, but is more "target specific". Avoid leaving your windows partially open to cool off the interior while you are gone. Parking in a well-lighted area at night is a good idea for personal safety reasons as well.

Remember, items left in your car may be visible to anyone. Secure them so that you may retain them.

#### Watch Captain meeting set

A Neighborhood Watch Captain meeting will be held May 29 at 7 p.m. at the Cerritos Senior Center at Pat Nixon Park, 12340 South Street. The meeting will include a

crime update and overview of the City's emergency response strategies, followed by a question and answer session. For information, call (562) 916-1258.

#### Call for security check

To request a free home vacation security check, call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044, or fill out the form available on-line at [www.ci.cerritos.ca.us](http://www.ci.cerritos.ca.us).

# Monthly Crime Summary: April 2002

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Cerritos Sheriff's Station recorded a total of 197 Part I crimes during the month of April 2002. So far this year, there has been a reduction of nearly 10 percent in this category from the same period last year. More than 60 of these cases were misdemeanors (or lesser crimes), a higher figure from the previous month that can be attributed to more vigorous prosecution of shoplifting suspects by merchants. Cerritos deputies responded to an average of 335 calls for service per week.

Six robbery-related incidents occurred in April. Current figures indicate that Cerritos has less than 1.5 of these crimes per week. One occurred on April 4 at about 7:30 p.m. in a residential neighborhood near 166<sup>th</sup> Street and Norwalk Boulevard. The victim was working in his garage when approached by a lone suspect who demanded cash. Another happened in a gas station parking lot at South Street and Carmenita Road. As the victim was putting air in his tires, the suspect struck him and stole his wallet. Deputies investigated a case on April 19 in which a suspect entered a non-retail business near Artesia Boulevard and Shoemaker Avenue. One suspect fled with a victim's wallet. On April 22, a man walking to his car was confronted in the large commercial parking lot near Alondra Boulevard and Studebaker Road. After seeing a knife in the possession of the suspect, the victim relinquished his cash. With good leads in this case, Cerritos detectives issued a press release, identified the suspect, obtained a warrant, and arrested the suspect in a nearby jurisdiction without incident.

A purse snatching took place in the parking lot of a large retail

center. The passenger of a passing vehicle reached out and grabbed the victim's purse.

The final robbery of the month occurred at 11:30 p.m. in a church on Pioneer Boulevard. The suspects, a male and a female, displayed handguns and took purses, wallets, keys, and cash from multiple victims. A car was stolen from the parking lot in this crime, but later recovered. Victims that do not resist a robbery attempt will most often avoid provoking the suspect(s) into acts of violence. These suspects are generally in a hurry to steal property and flee. Complying with their demands is the safest thing to do under the circumstances. It is also highly advisable when attending church, or other gatherings late at night, to keep the doors locked.

Cerritos deputies investigated 15 residential burglaries in April. This figure represents a reduction of nearly 29 percent from the same period a year ago. For the year of 2002, there has been an average of 3.61 residential burglaries per week. Data suggest that the most likely days for these crimes to occur are Mondays and Fridays, and all occurred in daytime hours. The property stolen consists mostly of small cartable items, including jewelry, cash, and smaller computer equipment. Bedrooms are generally the initial targets of burglars and are often ransacked before any other section of the home is affected.

Sheriff's deputies stress the effectiveness of a home alarm system and the installation of locking pins on sliding glass windows and doors. Burglars avoid homes utilizing any form of an electronic security system. The cost of these systems can be less

than \$30 per month to maintain with perimeter contacts on doors and windows, and motion detectors to sense the presence of someone in your home while you are absent.

A common method of entry for burglars is via sliding glass doors and sliding windows. The intruder simply pries these off their tracks and lifts them out. The use of locking pins will keep these potential "points of entry" stationary, and require the would-be burglar to use more time to access your home. In the eyes of the burglar, this is precious time wasted.

Open garage doors are still a problem. Due to the observations of an alert neighbor who contacted the Cerritos Sheriff's Station, a bicycle that had been stolen from a garage with an open door was recovered. In addition, a suspect was arrested. In many cities, side garage doors are frequently the point of entry for burglars as these doors are usually concealed from the street and often made with lightweight materials.

Vehicle burglaries are down from 2001 by nearly 18 percent. Some 44 such crimes were investigated in April. An average of eight vehicle burglaries per week have occurred in the City in 2002. The days that are most susceptible to these events are Mondays and Fridays, but vehicle burglaries are usually committed in hours of darkness. An interesting trend has developed in the past month where the location of vehicle burglaries has seen a slight shift from predominately high-volume commercial lots to more involving residential properties. The best way to counter this is to secure your vehicle within the confines of a garage.



Community Safety Division: (562) 916-1266

Sheriff's Station: (562) 860-0044