

Cerritos

Neighborhood

Watch Report

November 2002

Hardening the Target

Understanding Megan's Law

The September "Neighborhood Watch Report" addressed methods to ensure the safety and protection of our children. Since then, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center has received many inquiries about Megan's Law, which mandates the release of information necessary to protect the public from high risk sex offenders.

In conjunction with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the California Department of Justice (DOJ), the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center offers the following information about Megan's Law.

Megan's Law was created in 1996 after a 7-year-old New Jersey girl was molested and murdered by a known child molester that had moved in across the street from her home. Information on his background was not made available to those in the area. In response to this event, Megan's parents successfully initiated a drive to publish the criminal history of sex offenders.

California has long required individuals convicted of certain crimes to register with the local law enforcement agency where they reside. As a result of Megan's Law, the California DOJ now maintains a database of dangerous sex offenders that is accessible to the public. The purpose of Megan's Law is to inform the public, not to punish the registrant. Some of the information made available includes the name, sex, age, physical description, photo, crimes committed resulting in registration, county of residence

and zip code of the offender. California's Megan's Law statute prohibits using the information obtained to harass or commit any crime against the offender.

There are three categories of sex offenders included in the database. The lowest level, entitled "Other," cannot be released to the general public. This level involves offenders convicted of a single misdemeanor (or lesser) sex crime. The next level is labeled "Serious" and includes individuals that have been convicted of a single felony sex offense. The most critical level is called "High Risk." These offenders have been convicted of at least one violent sex crime and a combination of other offenses.

Three methods currently exist for residents of Cerritos to obtain information on sex offenders. The County of Los Angeles maintains records on its website at <http://gismap.co.la.ca.us/SOLS/viewer.htm> that can be accessed by entering the zip code for the area to be searched. This site provides only general locations of offenders. Neighboring Orange County has just initiated its own database that

can be found on the County's homepage at www.oc.ca.gov. It is currently restricted to only a few cities and unincorporated areas.

You may check to determine if a particular sex offender is a "high risk" or "serious" registrant by calling the California Sex Offender Information Line at 1-900-448-3000. This service allows you to inquire about two names, however, there is a \$10 fee to do so.

You can also visit the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center 24 hours a day and view the information on the CD-ROM located at the desk area. There is a 15 minute limit on access and you may not make copies of the records. You must be 18 years of age or accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, and a valid California driver's license or identification card must be presented. You must also sign a statement attesting that you are not a registered sex offender, that you understand the information viewed is intended for public protection and that you are aware that it is illegal to use the information to harass, discriminate or commit any crime against the registrant.

Beware of holiday scams

The holiday season is a time of increased scams. Door-to-door and telephone solicitations are common. Protect yourself during the holidays by not providing any personal information to solicitors; knowing an organization thoroughly before making a donation; telling solicitors

that you are not interested and instructing them to take you off their calling list; not letting solicitors make you feel guilty for terminating contact; and reporting door-to-door salespersons without the appropriate permits by calling the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044.

Monthly Crime Summary: October 2002

A total of 173 Part I crimes (mostly felonies) were investigated by Cerritos Sheriff's deputies during the month of October. This is the lowest monthly figure recorded in this category so far this year. Of these crimes, 49 were classified as misdemeanors, or lesser crimes. The weekly average of calls for service to date in 2002 is 358.

Eight robbery related incidents were reported in October. This is two fewer cases than were reported in September.

On Tuesday, October 1 at approximately 4 p.m. a male shopper was examining jewelry with a sales clerk in a store located in the 13200 block of South Street. The man grabbed two rings from the clerk and fled on foot. Due to the force used in taking the merchandise, the crime was classified as a robbery.

Another incident occurred the following evening at 8:15 p.m. in the 13200 block of 166th Street. Two suspects approached two victims that had been walking. One of the suspects told the victims that he had a gun under his shirt and demanded money. One of the victims relinquished a small amount of cash and the suspects fled. Detectives have good leads in this case.

On Thursday, October 10 at 9 p.m. in the 17800 block of Palo Verde Avenue, a woman reported that a purse was wrestled from her shoulder as she walked up a flight of stairs.

On Thursday, October 24 at approximately 3 p.m., two shoplifting suspects were attempting to leave a store located in the 20200 block of Bloomfield Avenue and were confronted by loss prevention officers. One of the men produced a knife to aid in their escape. Because of the fear element created by the weapon involved, the crime was classified as a robbery. Deputies arrested both suspects and recovered all of the stolen property.

Two cases were investigated on

Tuesday, October 29. The first case occurred at 4:30 p.m. and involved a lone gunman taking cash from an employee in the 17100 block of Edwards Road.

At 5:45 p.m., a man was wheeling a suitcase containing jewelry on the sidewalk near 195th Street and Pioneer Boulevard when a vehicle pulled up beside him. The passenger exited and struggled for control of the suitcase. After obtaining it, he fled in the vehicle.

On Thursday, October 31 at 12:40 p.m., a suspect in his late teens stood in front of a juvenile bicyclist near Bos Street and Gridley Road and instructed the youth to get off the bike. The suspect then fled on the bike.

The final case occurred later that evening at approximately 9 p.m. in a lot near the Towne Center. A suspect approached the victim seated in a car, and a struggle ensued over possession of a cell phone. The victim was subsequently pulled from the car and sustained stab wounds in the leg and arm.

Cerritos deputies investigated 18 residential burglaries in October. Three attempted break-ins are included in this figure. Residential burglaries were down by two cases compared to September. In 2002, the weekly average of such crimes is currently 3.9. The primary target of these crimes continues to be the bedroom area, which is routinely ransacked in search of concealable valuables such as cash and jewelry. Of the 15 actual residential burglaries, six were facilitated by doors or windows left open by the occupants prior to leaving the residence. This practice allows the burglar an effortless entry into the home.

Another common method of gaining access to a residence is by prying open a sliding glass door or window. Inserting a screwdriver or similar device into the base of the track and lifting, or applying the device to the latch area easily accomplishes this. Locking pins

placed in the center frame will keep the window from moving. These are very inexpensive and extremely useful in home security.

Vehicle burglaries in October increased slightly over the previous month from 19 cases to 22. An average of 7.5 such crimes have been investigated by Cerritos deputies on a weekly basis in 2002. Visible items within the passenger compartment continue to be the primary cause of vehicle burglaries.

Another trend that has emerged is burglaries of vehicles parked near fitness centers. These cars are known to contain items that a customer may not want to take inside such as wallets and purses. Personal items such as credit cards and social security numbers are targets of such burglaries, to be used in subsequent acts of fraud against the victim's accounts. If you must take these items with you to the gym, always secure them in the trunk of your vehicle before you leave for the gym. Do not store any items in gym lockers that contain personal or financial information, such as purses, money or credit cards.

Vehicle thefts in October were down by seven cases compared to the previous month. There were 33 such thefts recorded, with five attempted car thefts included in the total figure. Of the 28 stolen, 12 were recovered within a week of the theft. One recovery was made possible by a tracking device. There was no indication that any of the stolen cars had a steering wheel locking device in place at the time of the theft.

Statistically, the owners of Honda and Toyota products run the highest risk of becoming victims of auto theft in California. Cerritos has experienced an average of 8.3 vehicle thefts per week in 2002. This category, much like vehicle burglaries, can be expected to increase during the holiday shopping season.