

Cerritos

Neighborhood

Watch Report

October 2002

Hardening the Target

Tips to protect yourself this holiday season

The holiday season is rapidly approaching. With this time comes two elements of which residents should be aware, due to their effects on crime. The first element is the end of Daylight Saving Time, which provides added concealment to criminals due to the extra hour of darkness. The second element is the season itself, which stimulates more shopping and stockpiling of merchandise in our homes to be distributed to family and friends.

In an effort to help protect residents and their property during this busy season, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center offers the following tips:

At home

Consider purchasing and installing a home burglary alarm system. Most burglars do not feel comfortable with these systems. Make your home appear as though there is someone present at all times. Timers on interior lights can create this illusion. Floodlights equipped with motion sensors further strip a potential criminal of any concealment and should be strategically placed around the home.

Open or unlocked doors and windows continue to be the reported point of entry for many residential burglaries. Keep all portals secure with solid core doors and deadbolts. Use locking pins in sliding glass doors and windows. If you plan to be away, call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station or visit the City's website and request that vacation checks be performed on your property while you are gone.

(This is a free service provided by Sheriff's personnel.) Do not advertise your holiday purchases by leaving boxes outside to be viewed. Cut them up and place them in a shielded container.

There are many ways for the criminal to research potential targets. They can pose as solicitors, park on the street or walk around your neighborhood to watch and better understand any routines. Don't provide anyone with information about your neighbors such as when they are home, the number of people living in a home, etc. Report any suspicious persons or vehicles immediately to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station. Do not be embarrassed or hesitant to do so. A quick response by Sheriff's deputies will make your neighborhood a risky gamble for criminals and a safer place for you and your family.

Shopping

Retail establishments will see an increase in shopping during this time, and criminals recognize this season as one of great opportunity. Always be aware of your surroundings. Never be afraid to make eye contact with someone. This displays confidence and lessens the chance that a potential robber would be interested in you. A timid person is more appealing to criminals. Frequently look around, especially while you are walking outside. If you carry a purse, hold it tight against your body. While you are in a parking lot, consider walking between parked cars. Keep your purse away from passing traffic, as

there have been incidents of passengers reaching out to grab a purse from pedestrians. Never get too close to a car when an occupant is asking for directions. Leave yourself a way out of the area.

When inside of a store or in a mall, keep a clear area around yourself and don't let anyone have physical contact with you. Making physical contact is a common method used by a "pick-pocket." If you use your credit card, don't lose sight of it. Be aware of the "double scan." This occurs when your card is passed through a credit card scanner more than once. It could be a way of obtaining your credit card number for unlawful use. Don't display the contents of your purse or wallet. Thieves may be watching to see how much cash you have and if you are an easy target.

Avoid making frequent trips to your car or placing merchandise inside before returning to a store. Thieves watch the lots and select desirable victims based on what they see. Never store anything that is visible within the passenger compartment of your vehicle. This is an open invitation to theft.

Finally, always look inside of your car before you get in, and have your key in your hand as you approach it. If there is someone loitering nearby, return to a location where there are many other people and report it to law enforcement, security or store personnel. Use your intuition. If something does not look right, act on your instinct and take evasive action.

Monthly Crime Summary: September 2002

Some 189 Part I crimes (mostly felonies) were investigated by Cerritos Sheriff's deputies during the month of September. Of these crimes, 62 were classified as misdemeanors, or lesser crimes. This is an overall reduction of eight crimes compared to last month. One area that increased was shoplifting cases, and there was a noticeable decrease in vehicle burglaries. Cerritos Sheriff's Station personnel dispatched an average of 390 calls for service each week in September.

Nine robbery incidents were reported last month. This is one more than August, however, it is a reduction of 3 percent compared to the same period one year ago. Arrests were also up in the cases investigated.

On Tuesday, September 3 at 4 p.m., a shoplifting suspect produced a box cutter when confronted by employees in a Towne Center retail outlet. On Friday, September 6 at 6 p.m. near Gridley Road and South Street, a male suspect grabbed a necklace from a female victim as she was walking. After being pursued by passersby, he dropped the necklace and fled on foot. A screwdriver was displayed to a driver on Saturday, September 7 near 183rd Street and Gridley Road at 3 p.m., and his car was taken. In another case on Tuesday, September 10 at 8:45 a.m., the same suspect took a car from a victim near Pioneer Boulevard and South Street. He was subsequently arrested while committing yet another carjacking in a nearby city. Both of the vehicles were recovered intact.

An attempted robbery occurred in a lot near the Los Cerritos Center on Saturday, September 7 at 4:20 p.m. A suspect walked up behind the victim and started pulling on her purse. He fled when she yelled for help. The suspect's vehicle has been recovered and detectives are working the case with substantial leads. Near Alondra Boulevard and Studebaker Road on Monday,

September 16, a man approached a female victim at approximately 7 p.m. and demanded her car. After she complied, the car was driven across the lot and abandoned. This suspect has been identified. Near the same intersection the following day at 6:10 p.m., two suspects physically intimidated a man into surrendering his wallet. Cash was removed and the remaining contents were thrown to the ground.

On Sunday, September 29 at 11 a.m., a man walked up to a woman in her car near Gridley Road and 183rd Street and told her that he was armed and wanted her wallet. He took a small amount of cash and credit cards, but was later arrested when police found him in possession of her stolen property. On that same day at 5 p.m. near Bloomfield Avenue and 166th Street, two juvenile subjects pushed a 12-year-old victim from his bike and rode away on it.

Twenty residential burglary incidents were investigated in September. This figure is identical to that of August. Two of these cases were attempted burglaries, where occupants of the residences scared off the potential burglar(s). The number of residential burglaries decreased by 2.5 percent compared to last year at the same time. The incidents occurred in different areas of Cerritos and there was no emerging pattern. However, 12 of the 20 incidents involved entry without any force through open or unlocked doors and windows. Items such as bicycles, an automobile and tools were removed from garages where the large door had been left open.

In many of these instances, the side garage door was left either open or unlocked. This allows a burglar effortless entry into the garage and provides concealment to use your tools to open the inner door to the house. By using solid core doors with deadbolts installed, force must be used if someone wants to get in. This can create an

uncomfortable situation for the thief, as a degree of noise is involved and may alert neighbors to his or her presence. By simply closing and locking all portals before you leave, you can help create that "uncomfortable situation."

If you sleep upstairs, make sure that all doors and windows on the first floor are closed and locked. Use locking pins in your sliding glass doors and windows to restrict any vertical motion commonly associated with prying them from the tracks.

Vehicle burglaries were recorded at their lowest level this year with 19 cases. This is less than 50 percent of the cases reported in April and May. However, this figure is still up approximately 8.5 percent compared to last year's total. Items taken continue to be visible from within the passenger compartment. Cell phones, briefcases, purses, laptop computers and jewelry comprise 80 percent of the items reported stolen. For the first time in many months, car stereo components and other property were reduced to the remaining 20 percent.

There were 40 auto theft cases reported in September. Twenty-five percent of these vehicles were recovered within a week of the theft. The current weekly average in 2002 is 8.5 auto thefts. The September figure is up by 0.5 percent compared to the same period last year. As reported in past publications, Honda and Toyota products continue to be the most likely cars to be stolen. None of these victims indicated that they had used a steering wheel locking device at the time the vehicles were stolen. Patterns for the thefts continually shift from high-volume lots to residential areas on a weekly basis. This will most likely change with the upcoming holiday season, as more of these crimes traditionally occur where there is a better selection for the thief, such as in the higher-volume lots.

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