

Cerritos

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Neighborhood

Watch Report

July 2003

Hardening the Target

Open doors and windows attract more than breezes

With the heat of summer upon us and continuing for the next couple of months, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to remind residents that leaving the garage door open for ventilation is a very bad idea, unless someone is present to observe the garage at all times.

An open garage door provides a burglar the opportunity to enter and steal something that he or she sees while walking or driving down the street. You may also be giving a burglar looking for a vulnerable target the chance to enter your home through the garage. We have had cases where a resident was in the backyard or with a neighbor, only to find that when they went back into their homes, they had become victims.

Also keep in mind that residential burglars look for windows that are left open by residents when they are away. Windows are often left

open intentionally for ventilation purposes, or inadvertently when a person simply forgets to conduct a last minute safety check before leaving the house. When a burglar sees an open window, he or she will generally attempt to ascertain if there is anyone inside of the home by knocking at the door or calling out a name. After a reasonable period of time lapses and they feel that the house is unoccupied, they will force the window open the rest of the way and enter the house. There have been cases where the residents were inside and refused to answer the door or acknowledge the presence of the party outside. Both burglar and resident were then surprised to meet up with each other inside the house.

If you choose not to answer the door, continue to observe the individual outside to make sure that he or she does not go into your backyard or otherwise attempt

entry. Making noise inside of the house will generally scare a burglar away, but a legitimate solicitor may hear you and continue to knock, knowing that you are inside. You have to make the decision here, but always be aware that this is a common method of confirming the presence of someone.

To have Cerritos Sheriff's deputies check out a suspicious person or a solicitor, call (562) 860-0044. If the person enters your backyard or attempts to get inside the house, make noise and call 911 at once. Be prepared to give the Sheriff's Communications Center a description of the person, any vehicle involved, and a direction of travel. This applies to anything out of the ordinary that you may see in your neighborhood. Remember, as concerned and aware citizens, together we can send a message to criminals that Cerritos is not the place to look for victims.

Advice on making 911 calls from cell phones

Many people, in the haste of the moment, automatically dial 911 on their cell phone to report an accident, emergency or crime in progress. What many people do not know is that cell phone 911 calls go directly to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) at a central location in Los Angeles. By the time the call is answered, the jurisdiction deter-

mined, and the call is transferred to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station, precious time has been wasted.

When you dial 911 from a land line in any residence or business in Cerritos, a caller ID with the address of the phone used will automatically appear on the console at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station Communications Center. If the caller is incapacitated or cut off, emergency

personnel can still be dispatched based on that information. With cell phones, this will not happen. Enter and save in your cell phone the seven-digit number of the law enforcement agency in your city of residence and employment. This will guarantee that the call is answered by the local agency responsible for addressing your urgent needs.

Monthly Crime Summary: June 2003

Overview

Part I felony crimes in the City of Cerritos during the month of June 2003 were recorded at 118 incidents. Decreases were noted in the categories below, making this month the second lowest in Part I crimes so far this year. Deputies handled an average of 338 calls for service per week so far this year, compared to 359 per week in 2002.

Robberies

There were eight robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in June, compared to 11 in May of this year.

On Tuesday, June 3 at 7:38 a.m., a victim was sitting in his parked car in a lot in the 13200 block of Moore Street when another car stopped beside his. The other driver exited and approached the victim's driver side window and asked for directions. When the victim rolled down his window to answer, the suspect produced a handgun and took the victim's wallet.

Employees of a drug store located in the 10750 block of South Street observed a male and female removing security tags from perfume bottles on Sunday, June 8 at 3:42 p.m. When they approached the suspects, the male stated that he had a gun in his pocket. After the employees backed off, the suspects fled with numerous bottles. Later that same day at 7:45 p.m., a lone suspect walked up to a victim in a parking lot near Gridley Road and 183rd Street and took his wallet at gunpoint.

On Sunday, June 15 at 2:45 p.m., a shoplifting suspect struggled with loss prevention agents outside of a store in the Los Cerritos Mall. The female suspect was quickly arrested and the property was recovered.

The next three robbery incidents reported were all purse snatchings. On Monday, June 16 at 7:15 p.m., a woman's purse was pulled from her grasp and she was thrown to the ground in a lot located in the 17500 block of Carmenita Road. The male suspect ran to a waiting car driven

by a female. The next incident occurred in a Cerritos Towne Center lot the following day at 2:47 p.m. when a male took a woman's purse and ran to the same waiting vehicle as in the previous case. On Friday, June 20 at 5:30 p.m., a male suspect made an unsuccessful attempt to snatch a woman's purse as she walked in the 11100 block of 183rd Street. All of the suspects in these three incidents have been arrested.

The final robbery in June occurred at 9:15 p.m. on June 24, and was also a purse snatching. A woman was placing items in her trunk in a lot at the Cerritos Towne Center when a male suspect approached and asked her the time. As she looked down at her watch, the suspect grabbed the purse from her arm and pulled it away.

Residential burglaries

Seventeen residential burglaries were investigated in June. This is one less than in May. Open/unlocked doors and windows were the cause of an alarming amount of entries. This is due in part to the warm weather and residents forgetting to make sure that their home is secured prior to leaving. (See this month's "Hardening the Target" on the reverse page.)

When windows and sliding glass doors are secured with locking pins, burglars are generally forced to break a window to enter a home. This is not a preferred method and is not often used, as the amount of noise generated by the breaking glass attracts too much attention.

The more that you do to secure your home, the more you will reduce your chances of becoming a victim. Consider using locking pins in conjunction with a home alarm system. Studies have revealed that burglars do not like dogs or alarm systems, due to the attention they attract. The cost of these systems is relatively low, and many insurance companies offer a discount on a homeowner's policy if an alarm is installed.

Vehicle burglaries

The 21 vehicle burglaries reported in June made it the month with the lowest such incidents so far this year. The locations of these crimes were about equally divided between residential neighborhoods and high-volume lots. While stereo items are frequently targeted, vehicle burglars are usually drawn to their targets by the property that they can see inside of a car. Briefcases, cell phones, laptop computers, purses, wallets and many other valuable items can be easily seen from outside and are easy prey. If you must leave these items in your car, secure them in the trunk where they are out of sight.

Vehicle thefts

The last category to report is vehicle thefts. Thirty-one thefts were reported in June, compared to 40 in May. Again, the location of incidents were about equally divided between lots and residential streets. Although Honda and Toyota products are the most frequently stolen vehicles in California, don't assume that you are exempt from vehicle theft just because you drive something else. The majority of vehicles stolen are used for transportation purposes. If you use an anti-theft device, you are much more likely to retain your car. Visible deterrents such as a steering wheel locking device tell the thief up front that he or she may want to locate another car.

Please visit our new web site dedicated to public safety in the City of Cerritos. Go to www.safercerritos.com to receive information on crime prevention, disaster preparedness and information relayed by the Department of Homeland Security on how to protect yourself and your family. You can also become a member of the Cerritos Crime Prevention Team (C.C.P.T.) and receive current information on a variety of topics intended to make you better informed and safer as you engage in activities within the City.