

Cerritos

Neighborhood Watch Report

June 2003

Hardening the Target

Protect your residence while on vacation

Summer is here, and for many people, it's time for their annual vacation. With the kids out of school, vacation time granted and the arrival of warm weather, many families will soon be taking an extended trip. It is important for everyone to keep in mind that packing a suitcase and checking the car should not be the only steps taken before departing on a trip. Consider the security of your residence during your absence.

Some people are fortunate enough to arrange for a "house sitter" to occupy their home while they 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 who must leave their homes unoccupied, a few security and safety measures need to be addressed.

Do not 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. This provides an "open invitation" to burglars and a quiet and effortless means of entry.

Secure the perimeter of your home and 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. These pins increase the stability of these portals, and are relatively inexpensive.

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. Most systems emit a high-pitched tone that can be heard as soon as a contact on a door or window is broken, or a motion detector picks up movement inside the home.

Alarm systems are not expensive to install, and generally cost less than \$30 per month to maintain. Furthermore, they are monitored 24 hours a day.

Secure your valuables

Be creative in the manner that you store your valuables while you are away from your home. The primary target in residential burglaries is the bedroom, which is known

to contain cash, jewelry and other valuable items. Consider storing your valuables in another room, and in a non-distinct container such as a box or even shoes.

Arrange for a free vacation security check

Finally, by visiting or making a phone call to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center at (562) 860-0044, or by logging on to the new Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center web site at www.safercerritos.com, you can initiate vacation checks of your home by Sheriff's Volunteers on Patrol (VOPs).

While you are on vacation, VOPs will check your home regularly for suspicious activity, loiterers, broken windows, open doors or other unusual signs.

The service is free, and the VOPs will leave you a concealed notice of service when your home is first visited, and then log each subsequent check on station records that are used as a means of tracking.

You will also be asked to provide a contact person in the event that something needs attention at your home. To access this form on the web site, select the "Vacation Security Check Request Form" under "Applications & Forms" at www.safercerritos.com. The form can be filled out and submitted online.

By taking a few precautions and making some simple arrangements before you leave, you will be able to return to your home just as you had left it.

Monthly Crime Summary: May 2003

Part I felony crimes in the City of Cerritos during the month of May 2003 were recorded at 144 incidents. Deputies handled an average of 330 calls for service per week so far this year compared to 359 per week in 2002.

Robberies were recorded at 11 in May compared to four in April. Five of these cases involved shoplifting suspects that used force in an attempt to escape after the theft had been committed. The first incident occurred on Wednesday, May 7 at 1:25 p.m. when a male suspect approached a victim standing in a lot near 183rd Street and Gridley Road. After asking the victim for the time, the suspect displayed a handgun and demanded the victim's money. On Thursday, May 8 at 5:26 p.m., a shoplifting suspect struggled with loss prevention employees at the Cerritos Towne Center. He was arrested without further incident.

Force was used in an attempt to escape after a shoplifting incident involving three suspects at a store in the Los Cerritos Center on Saturday, May 10 at 10:20 a.m. Two of the suspects were arrested. The property and the suspects' vehicle were also recovered. At 10:45 p.m., three suspects entered a store in the 11300 block of South Street and forced an employee to open the safe. When the employee could not, the suspects fled with a bank bag retrieved from the counter.

On Wednesday, May 14 at 3:45 p.m. in the area of Grayland Avenue and Artesia Boulevard, three teenage suspects pushed a youngster from his bicycle and stole it. At 9:45 p.m., six suspects entered a warehouse in the 13200 block of Alondra Boulevard. Five employees were ordered onto the floor after two handguns were displayed. Thirty-five big screen television sets were loaded into a truck and driven away. On Thursday, May 15 at 5:20 p.m. employees at the Cerritos Towne Center were assaulted by a shoplifting suspect when they

attempted to detain him. He was taken into custody and the property was recovered. On Monday, May 19 at 9:40 p.m. a restaurant in the 11500 block of South Street was held up by a suspect that showed a victim the grips to a handgun tucked in his waistband. On Saturday, May 24 at 10 a.m. a struggle involving a shoplifter and store employee took place in the 11500 block of 183rd Street.

A victim reported that a gun-toting suspect confronted him on Tuesday, May 27 at 10:20 a.m. in a bank parking lot in the 18600 block of Gridley Road. The suspect allegedly went through the victim's pockets and removed a bank deposit bag that contained cash. The final case involved a shoplifter on Tuesday, May 29 at 3:20 p.m. The suspect pushed an employee inside of a store in the 17500 block of Carmenita Avenue and drove from the scene with stolen property. The suspect has since been identified by Cerritos detectives.

Eighteen residential burglaries were investigated by deputies in May, with two attempted break-ins. This is up from 11 in April. The weekly average for these crimes in 2003 at the end of May was 3.5. Bedrooms continue to be the primary target and were ransacked for jewelry, cash, handguns, cameras and electronics. The most common means of forced entry involved the prying of sliding doors and windows. The most effortless entries were facilitated by residents who left doors or windows open or unlocked. This resulted in access to the bedrooms and to the garage area where bicycles, tools, and stereos from parked cars were taken. Lock all doors and windows when you are away and use locking pins to secure sliding windows and doors to the frame. Deadbolt locks in doors offer more structural integrity and inhibit the intruder(s) from kicking them in. Do not leave your garage door open and unattended for any period of time.

There were 31 reported vehicle burglaries in May compared to 48 in April. The weekly average in this category so far in 2003 is 8.5. While high-end car stereos have been the most popular targets in the past, that trend has changed since the first of the year. Visible items of value left inside of vehicles such as purses, wallets, credit cards, cash, laptop computers, jewelry and briefcases are frequently reported as stolen. Darkness and residential streets were an appealing combination for auto burglars in May. If you cannot park your car in the garage, take all items of value, including the garage door opener, into the house when you park the car.

The last category to report is vehicle thefts. Forty incidents were investigated including seven theft attempts. This is up from 29 in April. The weekly average in 2003 is currently eight. Unlike vehicle burglaries, most of the crimes occurred in high-volume parking lots. The most likely time of the thefts was in hours of darkness. In recent weeks, and contrary to the trend that has been emerging over the past couple of years, Honda and Toyota products have not been dominating the list as the most commonly stolen vehicles in Cerritos. This should remind us that we are not exempt from auto thefts just because we drive something else. Visible deterrents such as steering wheel locking devices tell the criminal right up front that the vehicle will be more difficult to steal. Fuel restriction devices and other "kill switches" are only discovered after the car has been entered, but are still effective in restricting movement. Global positioning technology (GPS) and tracking devices are good investments for locating your car after it has been stolen.

Please visit our new web site dedicated to public safety in the City or Cerritos at www.safercerritos.com.

Safety Contacts:
Community Safety Division -
(562) 916-1266
Sheriff's Station - (562) 860-0044



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