

Cerritos

Neighborhood Watch Report

September 2003

Hardening the Target

Consumers provided opportunity to “opt out” of excessive mailings

Every day consumers are barraged with countless pieces of mail containing offers of credit, merchandise, catalogs, vacations and more. While many people enjoy the choices and opportunities these mailings provide, others may prefer not to receive them at all.

As we have discussed in past issues, mail theft can result in identity theft cases, which now claim millions of victims in the United States and billions of dollars in losses. Credit issuers often do not take the proper measures to determine to whom they are issuing credit. If you are constantly receiving unsolicited credit offers, your chances of becoming a victim increases with each offer.

For those who wish to “opt out” of excessive mailings, TransUnion provides a way for consumers to say “No, thank you” to the numerous offers made by companies. If you would like your name and address removed from mailing lists obtained from the main consumer credit reporting agencies — TransUnion, Experian, Equifax and Innovis — call (888) 567-8688 or write to: TransUnion LLC’s Name Removal Option, P.O. Box 97328, Jackson, MS 39288-7328. Be sure and include the following information with your request:

- First, middle and last names (including Jr., Sr., III)
- Current address
- Previous address (if you have moved in the last six months)
- Social Security number
- Date of birth

• Signature

If you opt out, you will no longer appear on direct marketing lists obtained from the four credit reporting agencies. You may, however, continue to receive commercial mailings based on lists from other sources.

The Direct Marketing Association (DMA) can provide information about opting out of lists produced by companies that subscribe to their Mail and Telephone Preference Services. The DMA can be contacted at: Direct Marketing Association, Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512, or Direct Marketing Associa-

tion, Telephone Preference Service, P.O. Box 1559, Carmel, NY 10512. Include the following information with your request:

- First, middle and last names (including Jr., Sr., III)
- Current address
- Home area code and telephone number (for Telephone Preference Service only)

We would also like to remind you how important it is to obtain a copy of your credit report on an annual basis. Go over the information carefully to make sure that only those accounts you are aware of are being used.

Beware of staged auto accidents

According to the California Crime Prevention Officer’s Association, a study released in 2003 indicates that auto insurance rates in Los Angeles are the second highest in the nation. Insurance premiums are expensive in California partly because many people stage or cause auto accidents and swindle money from insurance companies.

So-called “hard fraud” involves deliberate acts to cause an accident or fake an injury covered under an insurance policy. There are some things that you can do to recognize the signs of being a potential target. If you are a young female or an older person, drive alone or drive a late model car, be especially cautious of the cars around you. Watch out for other drivers that unexpectedly yield their

right-of-way to you.

If you rear-end another vehicle, ask yourself: Did it stop suddenly in front of you? Was the other car an older and deteriorated model, perhaps with preexisting damage? Did the occupants of the other car try to intimidate you? Were you referred to an attorney, doctor or an auto-body shop by people at an accident scene?

Keep a disposable camera in your glove compartment and use it immediately after a collision. Take pictures of the positions of the various vehicles involved. Jot down license plate numbers of other cars that may be present for future reference as witnesses. Most importantly, contact the local law enforcement agency for a report and remain there until they arrive.

Monthly Crime Summary: August 2003

There were 135 Part I felony crimes investigated in Cerritos in August. Armed robberies, residential burglaries, vehicle burglaries and auto thefts were down compared to the first eight months of 2002. Deputies have handled an average of 355 calls for service each week this year. This is slightly lower than the average of 360 weekly calls in 2002.

Robberies

There were seven robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in August, the same number as in July of this year.

The first incident occurred on Friday, August 1 at 5:30 p.m. when the victim walked to the door of a bank located in the 17500 block of Carmenita Road. A male suspect offered to open the door and grabbed a bag from the victim that contained cash intended for a deposit. A substantial amount of the money fell from the torn bag and was recovered. The thief fled to a waiting car that sped away with the remaining contents of the bag.

On Saturday, August 9 at 2:30 p.m., two suspects entered a store in the 10900 block of Alondra Boulevard and selected merchandise. When they exited the store, employees attempted to detain them and a struggle ensued. The suspects were ultimately arrested and the property was recovered.

An attempted robbery occurred on Tuesday, August 12 at 7:15 p.m. A woman was entering her vehicle outside of a store in the 11300 block of South Street when a male suspect approached and said, "Thank you for your purse." When the suspect grabbed her purse, the two struggled until the woman's husband came to her aid. The suspect then fled.

On Friday, August 15 at 5 p.m., four suspects with a handgun confronted three juvenile males and entered their home in the 18200 block of San Gabriel Avenue. Miscellaneous items were removed from the home. Cerritos detectives

have excellent leads in this case, which is considered an isolated incident.

Another incident involved a lone female who had entered a bank in the 13300 block of South Street on Wednesday, August 20 at 4:10 p.m. The suspect approached a teller and produced a demand note announcing that a robbery was taking place, and then fled with cash. There were two other robberies reported involving the same suspect in San Bernardino County and in Orange County just before the Cerritos incident occurred. The FBI is handling the investigation.

On Friday, August 29 at 3:54 p.m., a male entered a store in the Los Cerritos Center and concealed a bottle of perfume. When he left and was confronted by loss prevention personnel, a fight ensued. He was arrested and the perfume was recovered.

The final case occurred later that same evening at 9:15 p.m. when three suspects walked into a restaurant in the 19100 block of Bloomfield Avenue and announced a robbery. They removed cash from the register and took wallets and purses from several patrons at gunpoint. As they fled the restaurant, two customers followed the vehicle as it departed on Bloomfield Avenue, and used a cell phone to contact the Cerritos Sheriff's Station to provide dispatchers with the suspects' direction of travel and vehicle description. Two of the three suspects were ultimately arrested and most of the cash and property was recovered. Detectives are pursuing good leads in the search for the third suspect.

Residential Burglaries

There were only three residential burglaries reported in Cerritos in August. The 2003 weekly average is 3.5, the lowest of the year. There were 20 residential burglaries reported in August 2002. Since January 1, residential burglaries have dropped nearly 9 percent.

One of the three cases involved

a former tenant that had taken appliances from the home before vacating. Another incident happened at a home under construction where a CD player and a faucet were taken. The last crime involved a large amount of cash removed after a sliding glass door was pried open. There is evidence to suggest that the burglar(s) had knowledge of the residence in advance.

Vehicle Burglaries

Cerritos deputies investigated 20 vehicle burglaries last month, the lowest number in one month this year. Overall, there has been a reduction of nearly 3 percent since the same time last year. Parking lots and stereo equipment were the most frequent location and target in August. The weekly average is 7.6. We continue to see patrons of fitness centers leaving cash, credit cards and identification in the passenger compartments of their vehicles while they work out. If you must take these items with you, place them in the trunk BEFORE you go to the gym.

Vehicle Thefts

Forty vehicle thefts were reported in August. This is a reduction of more than 12 percent from last year. The weekly average in 2003 has been eight. Over half of the cars taken last month were Honda or Toyota products, generally manufactured in the 1980s or early 1990s. Thirty of the 40 crimes were committed in parking lots.

There is no information to suggest that any of the stolen vehicles were equipped with an anti-theft device. If you own an older model Honda or Toyota model, we recommend that you use some type of anti-theft device even if you park it in your driveway. Realize that even if you own a different make or model, you are not exempt from auto theft. More Hondas and Toyotas end up with some degree of stripping compared to other types of vehicles, but those others are most often used for transportation purposes.