

# Cerritos

# Neighborhood

# Watch Report

August 2004

## Hardening the Target

### Back to school traffic safety tips offered

With another school year about to begin, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to offer the following tips to help make our school zones safer and improve traffic safety.

With school in session, there will be significantly more traffic. Pedestrians, bicyclists, buses and parents all contribute to school zone congestion. Most schools in Cerritos and other Southern California cities are faced with traffic issues such as double parking, speeding, unsafe U-turns, jaywalking and more.

In addition, children do not always follow the rules of the road. Oftentimes they enter the street from between two cars, attempt to get their bikes through an intersection before the light turns red, and skateboard into traffic.

Please remember to exercise a heightened awareness in and around a school zone. Potential

hazards are much easier to perceive if you are driving at or below the school zone speed limit of 25 mph. Special attention must also be paid to buses displaying flashing red lights when on an undivided two-lane roadway. In these instances, you are required by the California Vehicle Code to stop and wait until the flashing red lights are turned off before passing a bus.

Parents who allow their children to ride bicycles to school should keep in mind that a helmet is required for those under the age of 18. In addition, children riding bicycles must travel with the flow of traffic. When considering whether to allow your child to ride a bike to school, also think about the effect that a bulky backpack may have on your child's balance while he or she is riding a bike.

Follow these simple suggestions to help make our school zones

safer for everyone:

- Don't speed.
- Don't impede traffic by dropping children off in the middle of the street.
- Don't double park.
- Don't block intersections or driveways if you park your vehicle.
- Don't make U-turns.
- Always make sure that your children are wearing seatbelts when transporting them to and from school.

In addition, make sure that your child has adequate supervision if he or she arrives home before you do. While this may be difficult for some, any form of organized activity, or the immediate availability of a trusted adult, can provide the necessary guidance to help ensure your child's safety and also give you peace of mind.

### Don't leave open garages unattended

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station has received numerous reports from its Volunteers on Patrol that garage doors are being left open and unattended at an alarming rate. Most residents leave their garage doors open for ventilation purposes during the warmer summer months, which presents an irresistible opportunity for thieves. A majority of the residential burglaries reported are made possible by open and unattended garage doors.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center encourages residents to maintain a constant presence when the garage door is open. If you absolutely must have ventilation in the garage, consider raising the door four to six inches only. This will provide a breeze while still protecting the contents of your garage from view, thus lowering the chances that items will be stolen.

### Save the date

The next Crime Prevention Town Hall meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 8 at 7 p.m. at the Cerritos Senior Center (12340 South Street). Crime in the City and valuable crime prevention and safety tips will be discussed. In addition, Sheriff's deputies will be on hand to address safety concerns.

For more information, please call (562) 916-1266.

# Monthly Crime Summary: July 2004

There were 110 Part I felony crimes reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in July, the same number as the month before according to adjusted figures. (Additional investigation can reveal information to increase crime totals, and late reporting by victims will also alter previous numbers, resulting in "adjusted" figures.)

Robberies, vehicle burglaries and "other structure" burglaries decreased, but an increase was seen in residential burglaries and vehicle thefts. The 2004 weekly average of calls for service handled by deputies was 351 at the end of July, compared to 345 the month before. This increase was anticipated due to the busier summer months, however, the 2004 weekly average is still lower compared to both 2002 and 2003.

## Robberies

There were five robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in July, down from nine incidents in June. To date, robberies are down by more than 20 percent compared to the first seven months of 2003.

On Friday, July 2 at 2:25 p.m., two male suspects approached a female victim in a lot at the Los Cerritos Center and displayed a knife. After the suspects demanded money, the victim opened a door to her vehicle and locked her purse inside. One of the suspects grabbed the keys from the victim and unlocked the door to retrieve the purse. Both suspects then ran to a vehicle and fled.

An attempted robbery occurred at 7:55 p.m. on Saturday, July 17, and was reported on Monday, July 19. The incident occurred in a lot located in the 13100 block of Alondra Boulevard. A lone suspect used his finger to simulate a handgun and approached a male victim. After the suspect demanded money, the victim got into his vehicle and drove away. The suspect then ran to a waiting car and fled.

The next two incidents were connected and occurred at Cerritos Regional Park on Saturday, July 24 at 5:45 a.m. A lone male suspect attempted to take car keys from a victim and a struggle ensued. The victim grabbed a paint roller from the bed of a truck and the suspect fled. The same suspect then pulled a sleeping victim from another vehicle and drove away. A Cerritos Sheriff's sergeant observed the suspect's car and pursued it. The CHP later took over and the suspect was arrested nearly an hour later in Riverside County.

The final robbery case was reported on Monday, July 26. Two gun-wielding suspects entered a business located in the 15900 block of Piuma Road at 1:55 p.m. and took cell phones, cash and personal property from employees, and cell phone accessories from the business.

## Residential Burglaries

Nineteen residential burglaries were investigated in July, compared to an adjusted figure of 14 in June. An average of 3.3 of these crimes has been reported weekly in 2004. Despite a slight increase in July, residential burglaries continue to be down by nearly 12 percent compared to the same period in 2003.

Open garage doors continue to be a point of entry for criminals as residents seek relief from the warm weather by leaving these doors open for ventilation. Homes under construction have also been targeted by burglars, with tools and various furnishings reported stolen from job sites. Other items reported lost from residences included jewelry, cash, credit cards, handguns, laptop computers and other small items with significant resale value.

## Vehicle Burglaries

There were 43 vehicle burglaries reported in July, compared to an adjusted figure of 55 investigated in June. We continue to experience an average of 10 of these crimes each

week in 2004, an increase of nearly 24 percent compared to the previous year. This higher percentage is not unique to Cerritos, as the rate of these crimes has risen on a regional basis. Broken windows are the most frequent means of entry into a vehicle.

We have also seen an increase in vehicle burglaries involving SUVs and pick-up trucks. This is due in large part to the common knowledge that these vehicles do not have a secure trunk storage area. As is the case with most vehicle burglaries, drivers leave valuable items visible inside the passenger compartment, making them extremely vulnerable to criminals. While car stereo items were targeted in some cases, the majority of cases involved the theft of wallets, purses, laptop computers, briefcases, cameras and cell phones.

## Vehicle Thefts

Cerritos deputies investigated 46 vehicle theft cases in July, an increase from 23 cases reported in June. This is the highest monthly total recorded in 2004 to date, however, vehicle thefts are down by an average of three cases per week compared to the previous two years. No particular vehicle make or model dominated the list of stolen vehicles. A variety of vehicles were stolen including a forklift, tractor trailers, a dump truck and motorcycles. The majority of stolen vehicles in July were taken from parking lots.

## GOT SAFETY?

- A little paranoia is good!
- Live defensively!!
- Harden the target!!!

[www.safercerritos.com](http://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.