

Cerritos

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Neighborhood

Watch Report

December 2004

Hardening the Target

Take extra safety precautions during the holiday season

With the holiday season in full swing, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to offer some valuable safety tips. These tips pertain to holiday safety in your home and vehicle, at the ATM and when making charitable contributions.

At Home

Many people like to display their Christmas tree in the front window of their home where it can be seen by neighbors and those walking by. Keep in mind that observers can include potential thieves who are looking for visible items in your house or under the tree.

Stereo items, jewelry, computer components, expensive sporting goods equipment and toys are commonly displayed out in the open after being unwrapped. These are also the very items that are taken from many homes on a regular basis, except that a burglar generally must ransack a home in order to find them. If you display valuable property and create an opportunity for a thief to take advantage of it, you are making his or her job extremely easy.

Trash day is also an occasion when a thief takes notice. Similar to the way gifts are displayed under a tree, boxes and wrappers are openly discarded and are a telling sign of what is now inside of a residence.

Take the time to cut up any boxes and if possible, place them in closed containers. If this is not practical, tie the boxes in bundles

where the print cannot be seen from the outside.

Use discretion in the items you display. There is no reason to openly advertise the contents of your home to anyone, and being discreet just may help you avoid becoming a victim.

Vehicle Safety

As we emphasized in last month's Neighborhood Watch Report, never leave any item of value inside the passenger compartment of your vehicle. If you absolutely must leave a valuable item in your vehicle, lock it up in the trunk. Unfortunately, if you own an SUV or pick-up truck, you do not have this option, and thieves are well aware of this.

ATM Safety

Following are some tips to follow when visiting an ATM:

- Prepare deposit slips beforehand.
- Shield the keypad with your hand or body when entering your personal identification number (PIN).
- Do not leave your transaction record behind at the ATM.
- When using a drive-up ATM, make sure that all of your windows are rolled up and that the doors are locked.
- Always be aware of your surroundings. If you notice anything suspicious, use another ATM or return later.
- If you absolutely must use an ATM at night (and we do not recommend it), consider taking someone with you.

Charitable Contributions

When making charitable contributions this holiday season, keep in mind that many individuals take advantage of other's compassion during this time of year. Solicitors have been known to be less than scrupulous, even looking around the interior of a home when you open the door, to see if there is anything worth returning for when you are not there. Use a peephole, and don't open the door unless you know the calling party.

Telephone solicitors can be relentless and wear you down until you give in to them. If you are not familiar with the charity calling, be firm and end the call promptly.

Cell phone reminder

When you enter 911 on a cell phone, you will be connected with the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Communications Center. We urge you to program into your cell phone the seven-digit number of the local law enforcement agency where you live and work. This will save you the time required for the CHP to route your call to the proper jurisdiction. If you need to contact the CHP in an

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Monthly Crime Summary: November 2004

There were 93 Part I felony crimes recorded at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at the end of November. There were 95 crimes investigated in October. Vehicle burglaries and residential burglaries had the most noteworthy decreases in November compared to October. Deputies were handling an average of 352 calls for service per week so far in 2004, still below the activities generated to date for the two previous years.

Robberies

There were five robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in November. Four were reported the month before. Robberies are down 25 percent compared to the same period a year ago.

The first robbery occurred on Monday, November 1 at 6 p.m. An elderly male victim was approached by a male suspect in a residential tract near Bloomfield Avenue and South Street and was asked for identification. Believing the suspect to be a police officer, the victim produced his wallet, which was then taken by the suspect. The suspect ran to a waiting car driven by another individual.

On Friday, November 5 at 11:30 p.m., a man was held up at gunpoint at Heritage Park and robbed of a five dollar bill. The suspect ran away from the scene and the victim ran to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station to report the incident. By the time deputies arrived, the suspect had left the area.

On Sunday, November 7 at 2:40 p.m., a female was walking in a parking lot in the 20200 block of Bloomfield Avenue when she was approached by a male suspect. After struggling to obtain the purse on her shoulder, the suspect grabbed a cell phone connected to the purse and fled.

On Tuesday, November 23 at 3:39 p.m., four suspects loaded shopping carts with food items in a grocery store located near South

Street and Carmenita Road. Two carts were pushed outside without payment, and the fleeing suspects' vehicle ran over a store employee's foot. Due to the force used in the escape, the crime was elevated to a robbery. The vehicle has since been recovered, and the suspects are in custody.

The final incident occurred on Tuesday, November 30 at 8:35 p.m. when a woman began to walk toward a store from the lot in the 11100 block of South Street. A lone male suspect attempted to wrestle a purse from the victim's possession, but after a brief struggle, the suspect abandoned the effort and fled on foot.

Residential Burglaries

Twelve residential burglaries were reported in November compared to an adjusted figure of 26 in October. As of December 1, the total residential burglaries for 2004 was 173, the same number that occurred to date in 2003. The 2004 weekly average for residential burglaries was 3.4.

Nine of the cases in November involved entry without any signs of force, which indicates that windows and doors were either unlocked or open. DVDs, video games, camera equipment, cash, identification, credit cards, jewelry and tools were among the items reported stolen.

Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries were logged at 47 incidents in November. This is the second lowest figure this year in a one-month period, compared to the highest figure this year of 79 incidents reported in October.

Overall, vehicle burglaries are up nearly 35 percent compared to 2003. Commercial parking lots were the crime scenes for the majority of these incidents. Twenty-five of the cases last month involved the theft of high-end stereo components. Other items reported stolen were wallets, laptop computers, gym clothes, purses, identification, golf clubs, checks, credit cards, Social Security cards, currency, video

equipment, sunglasses and tools.

Vehicle Thefts

There were 34 vehicle thefts reported in November, one more than was investigated in October. The 2004 weekly average in this category is currently 7.6. There has been less than a one percent reduction of vehicle thefts compared to 2003. Of the total number of vehicle thefts in November, 22 of the reported vehicles stolen were Hondas and Toyotas. Parking lots were the primary location targeted by car thieves.

Web site offers valuable safety tips

Log on to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center web site for valuable crime prevention information. Located at www.safercerritos.com, the site offers breaking news, personal safety tips, weekly crime summaries, traffic safety tips, and information on various programs such as Neighborhood Watch and the Virtual Block Club. Emergency preparedness information is also available on the web site, along with valuable links to other local enforcement agencies.

Cell phone reminder

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emergency, use 911. The number for the Cerritos Sheriff's Station is (562) 860-0044. This 911 rule does not apply to homes or businesses in Cerritos that are wired by your local telephone provider. When you enter 911 from a landline in a local residence or business, it will go directly to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station.

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.