

Cerritos

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Neighborhood

Watch Report

February 2004

Hardening the Target

Increase your crime prevention awareness

Cerritos residents have been very helpful lately in reporting residential burglaries. Deputies have made some significant arrests thanks to individuals who reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station suspicious activities in their neighborhoods.

This month, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center offers tips on how to increase your crime prevention awareness and recognize behaviors that could indicate that a crime is about to occur or is in progress. Educated citizens equipped with the tools to question various activities and protect themselves and their property are oftentimes much more effective in crime prevention than the addition of more deputies in the community. Even if an activity does not turn out to be criminal, deputies are grateful for concerned citizens who call their attention to situations that appear to be out of the ordinary.

The majority of residential burglaries occur during the daytime. Burglars are aware that residents are usually away from their homes during this time. As a good neighbor and one familiar with the activities on your block, anyone other than the resident observed in the yard, on the porch or around a home is worthy of your attention. Make note of your neighbors' vehicles, gardeners, delivery trucks, etc. so you will be certain to notice anything that is out of place.

As a general rule, burglars will attempt to ensure that there is no

one inside a residence before entering. This can be accomplished by knocking on the door, calling out a name or peering into a window. Solicitors and pedestrians should be watched. The concealment provided by a back or side yard is most appealing to a burglar to facilitate entry into a residence. Pay attention to barking dogs, breaking glass or any other unusual noise.

Cars driving slowly through the neighborhood or those parked on your street that you have not seen before are also important to note, especially if there is only one occupant such as the driver. This could be the "lookout" for a burglar already inside of a home, and the person responsible for transporting the burglar and property away from the scene. A stranger talking on a cell phone should also be noted, as he or she could be in contact with a driver in the area to tell him or her that it is safe to pick them up.

Watch what people have in their hands. Any type of bag or container can be used to carry or conceal stolen property. However, keep in mind that burglars also like to place as much property as possible in their pockets to avoid suspicion. If you aren't sure that a person belongs in your neighborhood, call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station immediately.

If you notice a suspicious person or vehicle, write down a description of the car and license plate number, and the race, age, clothing and physical descriptions of the individual(s). This will help arriving

deputies spot the suspicious persons if they attempt to leave the neighborhood.

If you dial 911 on a cell phone, the call will go to the California Highway Patrol (CHP), not to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station. This happened recently when alert neighbors called to report suspects breaking into a home. By the time the CHP routed the call to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station, the suspects had departed.

Fortunately, the neighbors had recorded the license plate number and description of the car and suspects, and detectives were able to eventually arrest the burglars. Although this case had a positive ending, the delay caused by calling 911 instead of the Cerritos Sheriff's Station could have been avoided. Make it a point to program the Cerritos Sheriff's Station's phone number, (562) 860-0044, into your phone today.

In offering these tips, it is not our intention to make you think that every activity you see is suspicious. Instead, we hope to impress upon you the need to be observant and consider that certain activities could indicate that a crime is about to occur or is in progress. The best way to ensure that our neighborhoods are safe is to report suspicious activity. Under no circumstances should you intervene to prevent a property crime, as the risk of injury far outweighs the benefits. However, do not hesitate to call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station to alert our deputies.

Monthly Crime Summary: January 2004

Part I felony crimes were recorded at 112 events in January compared to 159 in December. The most significant decrease was noted in vehicle thefts, and robberies were also down. Cerritos deputies were handling an average of 334 calls for service per week at the end of the month.

Robberies

There were nine robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in January, down from 12 in December. On Friday, January 2 at 9:05 p.m., three young males walking in the 17300 block of Pires Avenue were confronted by two other males who told them to empty their pockets. Fearing for their safety the victims complied, and the suspects fled on foot after obtaining wallets and a small amount of cash.

The second robbery occurred on Monday, January 5 at 1 a.m. when a cleaning crew was working at a fast food restaurant in the 13400 block of Alondra Boulevard. As the victim was retrieving an item from his vehicle, two male suspects assaulted him, took his keys and fled in his SUV.

Another incident occurred on Wednesday, January 7 at 4 p.m. near the intersection of Del Amo Boulevard and Norwalk Boulevard. Eight juvenile suspects approached the teenage victims and demanded cash while one of the suspects wielded a knife. The victims complied and the suspects walked away.

A woman reported that two suspects escorted her from a store in the 20200 block of Bloomfield Avenue on Friday, January 9 at 1 p.m. and forced her to drive to her residence in a nearby city. Once inside, she alleges that they demanded a specific amount of money and after receiving it, forced her to drive back to the same store.

Detectives are continuing to investigate the reported robberies on January 7 and 9, and are seeking to clarify the victims' statements.

On Monday, January 12 at 10:45 a.m., two male juvenile suspects confronted a woman in her garage in the 17300 block of Horst Avenue and displayed a handgun. The suspects demanded cash and drugs, and the victim surrendered cash, jewelry and a laptop computer.

On Friday, January 16 at 6:40 p.m., a shoplifting suspect placed two faucets in a cart in a store located in the 10900 block of Alondra Boulevard and exited. When confronted by loss prevention personnel, the suspect made threats of violence and the employees backed off.

Another incident occurred on Saturday, January 17 at 4:30 p.m. and involved a shoplifting suspect who stole clothing and a pair of shoes from a retail store in the Los Cerritos Center. After a brief struggle outside of the store, the suspect was arrested and the merchandise recovered.

On Tuesday, January 27 at 7:50 p.m. a lone gunman entered a drugstore in the 13300 block of South Street and announced a robbery. He fled with cash from the register and personal property of an employee.

The final incident involved an attempted robbery on Thursday, January 29 at 4:20 p.m. when a man was playing basketball in his driveway in the 12300 block of Palm Street. One suspect emerged from a vehicle and represented himself as a peace officer while displaying a badge. The suspect then pushed the victim into the garage and threatened to handcuff him. At that point, the victim realized that the suspect was not an officer, and fled.

Residential Burglaries

Fourteen residential burglaries were reported in January, three more than in December. The current weekly average in this category is three. Daytime continues to be the preferred time for burglars to strike, with the exception of two cases where the

homes were under construction and tools were removed. An alarm system was responsible for scaring off suspects in one incident, but in another, the resident did not activate an existing alarm system and the home was successfully burglarized. Alert neighbors and a gardener were instrumental in the arrest of multiple suspects after they contacted the Cerritos Sheriff's Station to report suspicious behavior. Two other cases involved an ex-husband and a daughter of the victims.

Open or unlocked doors and windows were the point of entry in more than half of the crimes reported. The others involved the prying of a sliding glass door or window from its tracks. Property reported stolen consisted of golf clubs and a vehicle from an open garage, a wall mounted safe, jewelry, cash, credit cards, computer components, musical instruments and other items of personal identification.

Vehicle Burglaries

There were 44 vehicle burglaries investigated in January compared to 40 cases in December. Cerritos currently averages 9.3 per week. The majority of these incidents involved the theft of items that were visible in the vehicle's passenger compartment. Parking lots continue to be the location where the majority of these thefts occur. An alarming trend of burglaries emerged in residential neighborhoods where victims left wallets, purses and other valuable property in their vehicles overnight.

Vehicle Thefts

There were 31 vehicle thefts logged in January compared to 47 in December. The current average of vehicle thefts investigated each week is 7.8. Hondas and Toyotas manufactured in the 1980s and 1990s are the most frequently targeted vehicles for theft in Cerritos. Parking lots are the most popular locations for these crime to take place.