

Cerritos

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Neighborhood

Watch Report

January 2004

Hardening the Target

Prevent personal information from falling into wrong hands

Now that the holidays are over and the bills are starting to arrive, it is important to keep in mind some valuable tips to help protect yourself from identity theft.

Be aware that thieves know that mailboxes frequently contain personal identification information. Some of the information that a thief could use to establish new accounts in your name include your Social Security number, credit card numbers, driver's license number, cancelled checks and even health insurance cards and billing information.

A change of address can be

requested on an existing account or after a new account is established, and it could take a long time for you to become aware of the problem.

Following are some tips to help keep your personal identification information out of the hands of the wrong people:

- Pick up the mail soon after delivery.
- Consider dropping off outgoing mail at the post office.
- Pay attention to your billing cycles and review all statements carefully.
- Always shred documents that contain personal information.

- Give your Social Security number only when necessary.
- Keep items with personal information in a safe place and shred them when you do not need them anymore.
- Obtain a credit report every year to monitor activity on your various accounts. This is how many people discover that they have become victims. There are three major companies that offer this credit report service: Equifax (888) 766-0008, Experian (888) 397-3742 and TransUnion (800) 680-7289.

Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center seeks assistance in park watch

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center is seeking the assistance of residents in monitoring the local parks. Many residents use, walk by or drive by the City's neighborhood parks on a regular basis.

Reports of incidents at local parks are extremely low and usually only occur after the fact (for incidents such as vandalism and graffiti). The Cerritos Sheriff's Station is requesting that residents serve as its "eyes and ears" and make a point to notice activities when passing by a park.

If you are in a park, take a moment to look closer at the facilities. If you notice any suspicious persons or vehicles, call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station

immediately at (562) 860-0044. If you spot graffiti, please contact the Graffiti Hotline at (562) 916-1233.

While parks serve as a place for recreation and relaxation, they are also a lure for others with illegal intentions who are looking for a place to congregate. Please keep in mind that parks within the city are

closed from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Also, alcohol is not allowed to be consumed on the premises.

By fostering awareness of these issues, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center hopes to ensure that City parks will be a safe place for family, friends and neighbors to enjoy.

Save the date

The next Crime Prevention Town Hall meeting will be held on Monday, March 8 at 7 p.m. at the Cerritos Senior Center. Join us for an update on crime prevention strategies and techniques, and disaster preparedness information.

Members of the Community Safety Division and the Cerritos Sheriff's Station will be available to speak to residents about their safety concerns. For more information, call (562) 916-1245.

Monthly Crime Summary: December 2003

Part I felony crimes were recorded at 159 events in December. This is up from 131 in November, an anticipated increase due to the holiday season. By the end of the year, Cerritos deputies were handling an average of 354 dispatched calls for service per week.

Robberies

There were 12 robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in December, up from seven in November of 2003.

On Monday, December 1 at 11 a.m., seven male suspects robbed a bank in the 17300 block of Carmenita Road. An off-duty Cerritos Sheriff's sergeant observed them in their vehicle and directed responding deputies to an area near Whitney High School where the car was recovered along with cash. Six of the seven suspects were ultimately taken into custody.

On Saturday, December 6 at 6:50 p.m., two gun-wielding suspects held up a fast food restaurant in the 13700 block of Artesia Boulevard. The suspects fled along with a third suspect in a 1985 to 1990 white Chevy Camaro with tinted windows and damage to the passenger side of the vehicle. Witnesses described the suspects as male Hispanics between the ages of 20 and 25 years old.

An attempted robbery occurred at a fast food restaurant in the 13300 block of Artesia Boulevard at 7:50 p.m. on Monday, December 15. The same two individuals are suspected of committing an additional robbery at another nearby fast food restaurant approximately 25 minutes later.

Another robbery occurred on Thursday, December 18 at 8:20 p.m. at a fast food restaurant in the 13400 block of Artesia Boulevard. Three suspects fled with cash and personal property from employees. The suspects' vehicle was subsequently recovered with property taken in the robbery, and arrests have been made.

On Monday, December 22 at 8 p.m., a woman was at her car in a parking lot in the 11300 block of South Street when a female suspect attempted to take her purse. At 10:30 p.m. that same evening, a male suspect held up a video store in the 13200 block of South Street.

Two shoplifting suspects struggled with a loss prevention officer in the Los Cerritos Center at 11:15 p.m. on Tuesday, December 23. Both were taken into custody and property was recovered.

On Thursday, December 25 at midnight, two suspects entered a house in the 13500 block of Edgefield Street and took cash, a cell phone, jewelry and a computer monitor after tying up a male victim.

At 10 p.m. on Thursday, December 25, two suspects were stealing a car stereo in the 20100 block of Plaza De Cordoba when the owner interrupted them. The victim backed off, fearing for his safety.

On Saturday, December 27 at 10:40 p.m., a male suspect took merchandise from a store in the 11300 block of South Street. When an employee challenged him, he made threats of violence and the employee allowed him to leave.

An attempted robbery occurred at 3:15 p.m. on Monday, December 29 when a man was taking a nap in his car in the 11000 block of Hibbing Street. Two suspects woke the victim and demanded the keys to his car. After a brief struggle, the suspects fled. The same suspects then accosted a woman near Del Amo Boulevard and the 605 Freeway and stole her vehicle. Sheriff's deputies later arrested the suspects and recovered the vehicle.

On Tuesday, December 30 at 7:10 p.m., a man was standing in front of his driveway in the 19000 block of Grayland Avenue when he was approached by a male suspect. A handgun was displayed and money was demanded. After the victim complied, the suspect ran to a waiting car and fled.

Residential Burglaries

Eleven residential burglaries were investigated in December compared to 20 in November. That number is one of the second lowest recorded in 2003. There has been a more than 22 percent decrease in residential burglaries compared to 2002. Open or unlocked doors and windows and the prying of sliding glass doors and windows continue to be the most common means of entry. Two homes targeted were under construction. Items such as Christmas gifts, jewelry, cash and handguns were reported stolen. Alert neighbors were responsible for the arrest of four suspects, and burglar alarm systems stopped suspects in two others cases.

Vehicle Burglaries

Forty vehicle burglaries were reported in December compared to 28 in November. There were only three more reported vehicle burglaries in 2003 than in 2002. High volume parking lots were the location of choice for thieves. Smashing side windows was the most common method used by suspects to obtain items. Christmas gifts, car stereos, CDs, cell phones, laptop computers, purses, wallets and tools were taken.

Vehicle Thefts

Forty-seven vehicles were reported stolen in Cerritos in December. This was the highest figure for a one-month period in 2003, but the year ended with a 15 percent decrease compared to 2002. The weekly average in 2003 was eight cases. Parking lots were the primary location for vehicle thefts. Hondas and Toyotas continue to be the vehicle of choice for car thieves. There was no information to suggest that any of these stolen vehicles were equipped with an anti-theft device such as a steering wheel locking device or tracing system. Use of the former offers a visible deterrent to the potential thief. Tracking devices increase the likelihood that your vehicle will be recovered intact.