

Cerritos

Neighborhood

Watch Report

May 2004

Hardening the  **T**arget

Warm weather calls for pool safety

With the return of warm weather and the swimming season, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to offer a few safety tips to protect swimmers.

- Never swim alone.
- Never leave a child unattended in the water.
- Be proactive - maintain constant sight of children, no matter how shallow the water is.
- Don't rely on inflatable toys or flotation devices to protect children in the water.
- Post rules by the pool that prohibit running, pushing or dunking, and enforce them.
- Install a phone or keep a cordless phone poolside.
- Assign an adult as "Water Watcher" to supervise the pool/spa area during gatherings.
- Enroll children in a swimming lesson program at the earliest

possible age.

- Learn CPR and make sure that all caregivers over the age of 14 have such training.
- Mount basic lifesaving equipment such as a pole, rope and personal flotation devices (PFDs) by the pool and know how to use them.
- Keep toys away from the pool when not in use, as they have the tendency to attract young children.
- Consider installing a pool fence with self-latching gates.
- Never leave furniture near the pool fence that could enable a child to climb over the fence.
- Completely remove pool covers before using the pool.
- Remember to immediately check the swimming pool if a child is missing.

Cerritos Crime Prevention Team becomes the Virtual Block Club

The Cerritos Crime Prevention Team (CCPT) was recently renamed the Virtual Block Club (VBC) to better reflect a Neighborhood Watch program that is accessible via the Internet. Any changes in the actual program will be subtle.

VBC members will receive weekly crime information bulletins including summaries and maps. Alerts will also be posted as needed in a timely manner, and forwarded to all

members via e-mail.

To join the Virtual Block Club, visit www.safercerritos.com and sign up today.

The [safercerritos](http://safercerritos.com) web site also contains a multitude of valuable information on past crime activities, archived prevention articles, disaster preparedness, homeland security and numerous links to sites that will make you a better informed and safer citizen.

Palm tree thefts occurring

Collecting palm trees has become a fad among Southern California homeowners. These trees can take a decade to grow to maturity, and many people do not want to wait that long.

Law enforcement authorities in several Orange County cities have reported an increase in the thefts of palm trees from both residential and commercial areas. The rise in popularity of various palms has driven up demand and prices, thus creating a new black market. Mature trees can be worth \$500 to \$10,000 depending on the size and the variety. Newly planted palm trees are easier to dig up.

If you have palm trees or potted plants that have any value, you may become a target. Thieves know what they are looking for and usually commit such thefts at night or in the early morning hours.

One method used by homeowners that has proven effective in discouraging these thefts has been to pour a ring of concrete around the plant and attach a chain. The palm becomes permanently embedded in the ground once the concrete dries.

Monthly Crime Summary: April 2004

There were 73 Part I felony crimes investigated by the Cerritos Sheriff's Station during the month of April, compared to 136 the previous month. This is the lowest number in a one month period in 2004. Compared to March, decreases were noted in robberies, residential and commercial burglaries, grand thefts and vehicle burglaries. At the end of the month, Cerritos deputies had handled an average of 334 calls for service, down from 355 for the same period one year ago.

Robberies

There were four robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in April, down from five in March. This is a reduction of more than 21 percent compared to the same four months one year ago.

On Wednesday, April 7 at 2:10 p.m., three suspects entered a store in the Los Cerritos Center. While two served as "lookouts," the third suspect opened a watch display case and removed five watches. As the suspects were leaving the store, employees attempted to detain them. One of the suspects pushed an employee away, and the three escaped. (Any force or fear used to commit a theft elevates the crime to a robbery, regardless of the value affixed to the involved property.)

On Wednesday, April 14 at 2:15 a.m., a lone gunman entered a donut shop in the 17200 block of Norwalk Boulevard and jumped over the counter after striking a customer in the face with a handgun. The suspect took cash from the register and while fleeing on foot, fired the gun in the direction of an employee who was attempting to escape. There is video footage of this crime and detectives are pursuing leads.

At 3:50 p.m. that same day, four teenage suspects in the 19700 block of Bouma Avenue robbed three teenage victims. Cell phones, wallets and tools were taken. Deputies arrested the suspects shortly after the crimes occurred,

and all of the property was recovered.

The final attempted robbery case occurred on Sunday, April 25 at 7:55 a.m. when a suspect entered a liquor store on 166th Street and Norwalk Boulevard and began to break beer bottles in an attempt to lure a clerk out from behind a security glass. When the clerk remained behind the glass, the suspect put on a mask, announced a robbery and fired one bullet through a security window. The suspect fled without any money and the clerk sustained a minor flesh wound in his side. This robbery was subsequently connected to the same suspect that perpetrated the crime at the donut shop on April 14, and a \$10,000 reward has since been offered by the City of Cerritos for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of the responsible party.

Residential Burglaries

Eleven residential burglary cases were reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in April. This is down from 19 in March. The weekly average of these crimes is currently 3.1, compared to 3.5 in 2003 and 5.5 in 2002.

Open or unlocked doors and windows continue to be the point of entry for most residential burglaries. Due to record setting warm weather, residents increasingly left these portals open for added ventilation, providing an easy opportunity for suspects to commit their crimes.

Open garage doors resulted in the theft of tools and bicycles. Bedrooms were ransacked in other residential burglary cases, resulting in the loss of cash, jewelry, computer equipment, personal identification, credit cards and checkbooks. These items will most likely end up being sold on the black market, pawned for cash or used in identity theft, forgery and credit card fraud.

Vehicle Burglaries

The number of vehicle burglaries decreased in April, with 39 cases

being investigated compared to 50 in March. The year-to-date weekly average was 10 cases at the end of the month. This figure reflects an overall increase in vehicle burglaries that has not only been experienced in Cerritos, but in virtually all of the reporting jurisdictions in Southern California. Visible items left in the passenger compartments of vehicles have attracted the attention of thieves, and continue to be the catalyst for smashing a window and quickly removing property. Car stereo items were targeted in several of the burglary cases, but the majority of items taken were purses, wallets, laptop computers, briefcases and jewelry.

Vehicle Thefts

Twenty-four vehicle thefts were brought to the attention of deputies in April, an increase of three cases compared to March. The weekly average in this category so far this year is 7.3. The City of Cerritos has experienced a reduction of nearly 10 percent compared to the same four month period in 2003. Parking lots continue to be the venue of choice for thieves, as the selection is much greater than in residential areas. Transportation is still the primary motive for auto thefts. Hondas and Toyotas manufactured in the mid 1980s through the late 1990s still dominate the list of most frequently stolen vehicles. However, there have been several other makes and models reported stolen in April, which suggests a lack of vehicle security devices being used to help prevent these crimes.

Crime Prevention Town Hall Meeting

Wednesday, June 23
7 p.m., Cerritos Senior Center
(12340 South Street)
(562) 916-1266

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.