

# Cerritos

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# Neighborhood

# Watch Report

November 2004

## Hardening the Target

### Protect yourself from vehicle burglaries

Recently there has been a regional increase in vehicle burglaries. The majority of these crimes occur when a vehicle burglar observes valuable property left visible in the passenger compartment of a vehicle. Vehicle owners are relying too heavily on the thin glass windows of their vehicles to protect their property.

While most of these crimes occur in high-volume parking lots, there have been an increasing amount of vehicle burglaries reported in residential areas, predominantly during the early morning hours. Drivers are leaving property in their vehicles overnight, making it vulnerable to thieves.

High-volume parking lots are still the most popular location for vehicle burglars to seek out

potential victims. There are more vehicles available, and the odds are greater that someone will have made the mistake of leaving a laptop computer, cell phone, purse, briefcase or other valuable item visible within their vehicle's passenger compartment.

Keep in mind the following tips to avoid becoming a victim of a vehicle burglary:

- When you park your car at night, take all valuable items inside with you.
- Try to make only one trip to your car with merchandise you have purchased, and then leave the lot. Thieves have been known to watch shoppers to see what items they place in their cars before returning to a store to continue shopping.

- Never leave your identification, wallet, credit cards or jewelry in your vehicle while visiting a fitness center. Doing so is much riskier than using a locker inside the gym or leaving these items at home.
- If you absolutely must leave property in your car, lock it in the trunk. This option does not exist if you own a pick-up truck or an SUV. Thieves are aware that there is no secure place to store items in these types of vehicles, and that people will leave valuables inside.
- Finally, before you leave your vehicle, take a second to look inside and make sure that nothing is visible that could attract a vehicle burglar.

### Safety tips for the holiday shopping season

With the holidays just around the corner, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to offer the following tips to help holiday shoppers remain safe this season:

- Always be alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Never fight over parking spaces. It is not worth inciting someone into violence. In addition to putting your personal safety

at risk, your car could also be vandalized as a result.

- Always park in a well-lighted area. Remember this even when parking in daylight. Look for landmarks and remember where you parked so that you are not roaming the parking lot looking for your car after shopping.
- Always try to walk with someone else. Robbers focus on solo shoppers.
- Carry your purse and

belongings on the side of your body that is on the opposite side of traffic.

- Obtain cash during the day and never use an ATM at night.
- Never leave packages, bags, cell phones, purses or other valuable items inside the passenger compartment of your vehicle.

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# Monthly Crime Summary: October 2004

There were 95 Part I felony crimes recorded at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in October. There were 97 cases recorded in September. The latter figure was adjusted to reflect additional crimes that occurred in September, but were reported in October. Vehicle burglaries increased to the highest number reported in a one-month period in 2004. Deputies handled an average of 352 calls for service per week so far in 2004. This is below the number of calls generated during the same time period in the two previous years.

## Robberies

There were four robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in October, down from five incidents in September. Overall, robberies are down nearly 27 percent this year compared to 2003.

On Friday, October 8 at 7 a.m., a male suspect entered a gas station in the 13300 block of South Street and asked the attendant to change a dollar bill. When the cash register was opened, the suspect simulated a handgun under his jacket and demanded cash. He fled on foot after obtaining the cash.

At 4:30 p.m. the following day, an attempt was made to detain two shoplifters outside of a store in the 11500 block of South Street. A struggle ensued and one shoplifter was arrested while the other escaped.

On Monday, October 18 at 6:35 a.m., a suspect entered a gas

station in the 12100 block of Artesia Boulevard. After displaying a handgun, the suspect demanded and then received money from the clerk.

The final incident involved an elderly man who was approached by two suspects in a nearby city on Wednesday October 27 at 3:30 p.m. The victim of a scam, the man drove to a bank in the 13300 block of South Street to make a cash withdrawal to "match" the funds of the suspects. Fearful that he or his wife would be harmed, he allowed the suspects to take a large sum of money from him.

## Residential Burglaries

There were 24 residential burglaries reported in October. This is up by 10 cases compared to September. The 2004 weekly average for residential burglaries was 3.4 at the end of the month. Compared to 2003, residential burglaries are up by 3 percent. Twelve of the cases in October involved doors or windows that were left open or unlocked. Other incidents involved the prying open of sliding glass doors or windows, and physical force applied to doors. Items reported stolen last month included jewelry, cash, credit cards, cell phones, a handgun, identification, passports, a safe, clothing, tools and video games.

## Vehicle Burglaries

A total of 74 vehicle burglaries were reported in October. This is the highest monthly figure of the year. There were 35 such cases in

September. The 2004 weekly average in this category was nearly 10 at the end of the month, however, there were two consecutive weeks in October when the total number of cases was 22. More cases have been reported in residential areas compared to previous months, but parking lots are still the primary locations for such crimes.

Stereo components are frequently taken, but the overwhelming majority of property stolen in October consisted of items that were left visible in the passenger compartment of vehicles. These items included wallets, laptop computers, purses, identification, checks, credit cards, Social Security cards, clothing, currency, video equipment and tools.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts increased by seven incidents compared to September, and were reported at 32. The weekly average so far this year has been 7.6. That figure is below figures from the two previous years, and is an overall reduction of nearly 4 percent compared to last year.

While a variety of different vehicles were stolen last month, Hondas and Toyotas were frequent targets. Thieves target vehicle parts in many of these thefts, but the primary purpose of these crimes continues to be to secure transportation. Parking lots remain the most common location for these crimes to occur.

## Safety tips for the holiday shopping season

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- Look around and under your car as you approach it. Have your keys in your hand so you can enter your vehicle and close the door quickly.
- When loading packages or children into your car, always be aware of your surroundings. Keep an eye on purses and other packages and property.

- Be aware of anybody that approaches you from behind.
- Never buy any items from someone who approaches you in a parking lot. These items are often stolen, substandard or fake.
  - Keep your purse zipped and/or your wallet pocket buttoned up. Don't hang your purse on a fitting room hook. Place it on the

- bench where you can see it.
- When shopping, don't put your bags on the floor to try something on or to walk around the store. Keep all bags and purses within your sight at all times.
  - Don't look or act like a victim, and chances are you will not become one.

Safety Contacts:  
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To join Cerritos Neighborhood Watch, call Community Mobilization Officer Mike Yach at (562) 916-1258.