

# Cerritos

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# Neighborhood

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# Watch Report

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October 2004

## Hardening the Target

### Understanding the “Triangle of Crime”

There are three major components that are necessary for the completion of any given crime: the criminal, the victim and the opportunity. Without all three of these components, no crime can occur.

#### The Criminal

Unfortunately, the number of criminals is staggering. There are currently more than 175,000 inmates in the custody of the California Department of Corrections. This does not include those being held at the county or municipal level. In Los Angeles County alone, that figure exceeds 20,000. Also to be considered are the many individuals on parole or probation.

Incarceration can sometimes serve as a training ground for criminals. Inmates may share information on police response procedures, how to select victims, how to commit crimes, and how to avoid detection. Upon release, the more “polished” criminals return to the streets. Unfortunately for society, when one criminal is identified and taken off of the streets, there are many more to step up and replace him.

Most criminals are calculating and leave their homes with a specific crime and method in mind to achieve their goals. Many will act upon impulse as the situation presents itself. In the Triangle of Crime, eliminating the criminal from the equation is realistically impossible.

#### The Victim

For every crime committed, there is a victim. It is very common for a criminal to have multiple victims. There are direct victims, such as those robbed at gunpoint, and indirect victims. Examples of indirect victims are those who suffer higher insurance rates due to fraud, or succumb to physical problems due to illegal dumping of toxic materials. There is also a category of victims that fall under the heading of “People of the United States or of the State of California.” Under this category, interests adverse to our well-being as a whole are experienced.

The number of potential victims is even larger than the number of criminals.

#### The Opportunity

Opportunity is the third component of the Triangle of Crime, and the one we have the most control over in our quest to reduce crime. The opportunity to commit a crime is what we as victims present to a criminal. Criminals, while either calculating or acting on impulse, must have an opportunity in order to commit a crime.

There are simple steps that can be taken to reduce the opportunities presented to criminals. The steps include: not leaving items of value in the passenger compartment of your vehicle where they can be seen from outside; parking your vehicle in the garage at night; checking that all windows and doors are locked



before leaving home; installing hardware in sliding glass windows and doors to keep them from moving vertically or horizontally when closed; making sure that exterior doors are of solid core construction and have deadbolts; installing an alarm system and posting alarm company signs in front of your home; avoiding the use of ATMs at night; walking in pairs (street robbers rarely approach multiple victims); and using a steering wheel locking device in your car as a visible deterrent to avoid theft.

We all have some influence over the opportunity component of the Triangle of Crime. By thinking proactively and doing what we can to remove the opportunity for a potential criminal, we have the ability to make life safer.

For more information on crime prevention and safety tips, visit [www.safercerritos.com](http://www.safercerritos.com) and sign up for the Virtual Block Club.

# Monthly Crime Summary: September 2004

There were 82 Part I felony crimes recorded by the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at the end of September. This compares to an adjusted figure of 118 crimes recorded in August. Deputies have handled an average of 351 calls for service per week so far in 2004. This is below the number of calls generated in the two previous years during the same time period.

## Robberies

There were five robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in September, the same number of incidents investigated in August.

On Thursday, September 2 at 6:59 p.m., a male suspect was observed changing price tags on merchandise in a store located in the 11900 block of South Street. When confronted by employees, he began to struggle and was taken into custody.

At 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 5, four suspects were seen concealing clothing in a store at Palo Verde Avenue and South Street. When loss prevention personnel attempted to detain them, they raised their fists and fled. All four were later arrested in a nearby city after a car stop was initiated.

Another shoplifting case occurred on Monday, September 20 at 5:39 p.m. A male suspect took CDs from a retail store in the 20200 block of Bloomfield Avenue and struggled with loss prevention employees

when they attempted to detain him. He was taken into custody.

On Tuesday, September 21 at 11:35 a.m., a woman was seated in her vehicle in a lot located in the 17200 block of Studebaker Road when a male suspect approached, grabbed the keys from the ignition and ordered her from the vehicle. When the victim refused, the suspect pushed her aside, grabbed a bible from the rear seat and fled into a nearby van being driven by an additional suspect.

The final robbery case occurred on Saturday, September 25 at 1:47 p.m. after a man had just withdrawn cash from an ATM at a bank in the 18700 block of Gridley Road. A gun-wielding suspect took the money and fled on foot.

## Residential Burglaries

Thirteen residential burglary cases were investigated in September. There were 15 cases investigated in August. Five of the cases were attempted burglaries. Five other cases involved open/unlocked doors and windows. The remaining burglaries involved the prying open of a sliding glass door or window, and the unusual method of shattering windows. The 2004 weekly average for residential burglaries was 3.3 at the end of September. This is down nearly 3 percent compared to 2003. Items taken last month included jewelry, cash, credit cards, cell phones, a shotgun, clothing, tools and video games.

## Vehicle Burglaries

A total of 35 vehicle burglaries was reported in September. This is down from an adjusted figure of 66 in August. An average of 10 of these crimes has occurred each week so far this year. Overall, this is a nearly 30 percent increase compared to 2003. This increase is not just specific to Cerritos, as the region in general has experienced a rise in these crimes. While stereo components are common targets of vehicle burglaries, the majority of these incidents are motivated by items visible within the passenger compartment of vehicles. In September, these items included wallets, laptop computers, purses, identification, checks, credit cards, Social Security cards, currency and tools. Parking lots continue to be the most common location for vehicle burglaries.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts were down from an adjusted figure in August of 33 to 25 in September. The 2004 weekly average of vehicle thefts in Cerritos is 7.3. There has been a decline of nearly 5 percent in this category compared to 2003. A variety of different vehicles were stolen last month including motorcycles and cargo trailers from commercial areas. While parts and freight are occasionally the target of such thefts, the primary motivation continues to be transportation, and parking lots are still the main venue used to obtain vehicles.

## Follow tips for Halloween safety

As Halloween approaches, the City would like to remind parents and children to take some extra safety precautions to help ensure a safe and festive holiday.

Pay close attention to the costumes that your children will be wearing. Costumes should be non-restrictive to allow free movement and uninhibited vision. They should be constructed of a fire retardant material. Make sure that masks do

not hinder a child's breathing.

Always remain in familiar territory. When going door-to-door, travel in groups with at least one responsible adult. Use flashlights or lighted wands to help you see and be seen.

Carefully inspect all items received before anything is eaten, and throw away any candy or treat that is not securely wrapped by the manufacturer.

## Check smoke alarms

Daylight saving time ends on Sunday, October 31. When you set your clocks back one hour, remember to also check the batteries in your smoke alarms. A properly functioning smoke alarm can greatly reduce your risk of dying or being injured in a fire.

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.