

# Cerritos

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# Neighborhood

# Watch Report

April 2005

**H**ardening the  **T**arget

## Protect yourself when purchasing items on the Internet

Purchasing items on the Internet has become a popular way of shopping for millions of consumers. However, news of hacker attacks and credit card theft leaves many people wondering if Internet shopping is really safe.

Internet shopping is safe. While there are some instances of theft and hacking that do occur, in reality, it is not a significant problem. There is a far greater risk of theft of your credit card information when you use your credit card for payment at establishments such as restaurants, gas stations and other stores.

However, there are a few tips that you should follow to reduce your risk of falling victim to credit card and identity theft when shopping on the Internet. Many of these tips are based on common sense.

### Pay with credit cards

Remember to always pay with credit cards and not debit cards or personal checks on-line. With a credit card, your exposure to loss is limited to \$50, whereas with a debit card your exposure to loss is \$500, and in some cases, unlimited. Never pay by personal check on-line because you will be providing too much of your banking information. Check with your bank regarding

your protection from loss if your bank account is misused.

Even when you have adequate protections in place against misuse of your account, your good credit can be harmed or destroyed by hackers. If this occurs, it can take a substantial amount of time to repair all of your banking and credit records and recover from your financial loss. Other options for purchasing items over the Internet are slowly becoming available, such as paying by digital currency, but these options are still emerging.

### Understand the return policy

Check the policy for returning merchandise and obtaining refunds whenever you make a purchase on

the Internet. Many Internet shopping sites do not allow for refunds or returns. Read the vendor's return policy and understand it before ordering items on the Internet.

### Avoid "free gifts"

Finally, never click on "free gifts" or other items to download except from sources that you know and trust. This could result in a virus being inadvertently downloaded onto your computer.

(Information for this article was provided by Russ Kelly, CSP, a 37-year technology veteran, Internet business researcher and e-business consultant.)

## Volunteers on Patrol wanted

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station is seeking Volunteers on Patrol (VOPs). Patrolling in distinctly marked vehicles, VOPs assist with crime suppression in the city, handle traffic control, vacation checks, special events and park security checks. They serve as additional "eyes and ears" for the Sheriff's Department, and also train as first responders in the event of a major emergency or disaster.

If you are interested in helping Cerritos maintain its reputation as a safe place to live and work, we encourage you to consider this valuable service to your community.

For more information, call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center at (562) 916-1266, or visit the Cerritos Sheriff's Station to obtain an application.

# Monthly Crime Summary: March 2005

Cerritos Sheriff's Station personnel investigated 76 Part I felony crimes in March. This is lower than the 87 cases investigated the previous month. The 2005 weekly average in calls for service at the end of the month was 337.

## Robberies

There were 17 robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in March, up from 12 incidents investigated in February.

The first incident occurred on Tuesday, March 1 at 9 p.m. A shoplifting suspect bit a store employee after taking merchandise from a retail outlet in the Los Cerritos Center and attempting to flee.

On Wednesday, March 2 at 8:45 p.m., a female suspect attempted to wrestle a purse from the possession of another woman in the 11300 block of Michelle Street.

On Sunday, March 6 at 3 p.m., a youth riding a bicycle in Regional Park was struck in the stomach by another teen. The suspect then rode away on the victim's bike.

The next incident occurred on Sunday, March 13 at 11:27 p.m. A man was walking in the 15900 block of Studebaker Road when a vehicle containing three males pulled up next to him. Two of the occupants produced handguns and robbed the victim of his wallet.

Six robberies were investigated the week of March 14, all involving the same suspects. On Saturday, March 19 at 2:30 a.m., a man was held up at gunpoint in the 17100 block of Stark Avenue.

The next five incidents all occurred on Sunday, March 20, with the first at 3:18 a.m. in the 13000 block of Hedda Lane. A male victim approached the suspects' vehicle to give directions and was robbed.

At 7:45 p.m., a woman was pushed to the ground in a parking lot in the 11500 block of South Street and her purse was stolen.

An attempted robbery occurred at 9:40 p.m. in the 17800 block of Stowers Avenue when a demand was made for the male victim's

wallet. The suspects fled after the victim threw the wallet over a fence and started yelling for help. The suspects' vehicle then pulled up to a woman at 10:30 p.m. as she stood in her driveway in the 13300 block of Felson Avenue. The woman ran into her home when her purse was demanded, and the suspects drove away.

At 10:40 p.m. in the 16300 block of Flat Peak Lane, suspects pulled up to a man as he exited his vehicle and robbed him of his wallet. A sheriff's sergeant observed the suspects' vehicle and with the help of assisting units, arrested the suspects. These individuals were later linked to nearly 30 similar crimes in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

On Thursday, March 24 at 10:17 a.m., two male suspects entered a fast-food restaurant in the 11800 block of Del Amo Boulevard and produced a handgun. After removing the entire cash register containing currency, they fled.

At 6 p.m. that evening, a male juvenile struggled with store security and displayed a cutting instrument in the Los Cerritos Center after shoplifting. Deputies arrested him at a nearby park.

On Saturday, March 26 at 10:45 a.m., three male juveniles on bicycles, brandishing what appeared to be a handgun, robbed two victims as they were walking in the park at Bloomfield Avenue and 195th Street. Cash was stolen.

On Tuesday, March 29 at 7:05 p.m., three suspects in a vehicle pulled up to a victim walking near Studebaker Road and 166th Street. One of the occupants simulated a handgun and demanded the victim's wallet.

At 11:10 p.m. that same evening, two male suspects on foot attempted to rob a victim on a motorcycle as he yielded for a stop sign in the 16900 block of Gridley Road. When the victim ran to a friend's car, the suspects fled.

On Wednesday, March 30 at 4:25

p.m., a woman was sitting in her vehicle in a lot in the 11400 block of South Street when a male approached her, simulated a handgun and demanded her money.

On Thursday, March 31 at 11 p.m. in the 12600 block of Del Amo Boulevard, three male juveniles accosted two male victims. A wallet and bicycle were taken. Arriving deputies arrested the suspects.

## Residential Burglaries

There were 14 residential burglaries reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in March. There were 17 reported the previous month. The 2005 weekly average for residential burglaries is 5.4. Eight of the cases in March involved open/unlocked doors or windows. Prying open a sliding glass door or window was the next preferred method of entry. Property reported stolen consisted of digital cameras, wallets, social security cards, cash, credit cards, jewelry and tools.

## Vehicle Burglaries

Deputies investigated 56 vehicle burglaries in March. There was an adjusted total of 51 in February. The 2005 weekly average for vehicle burglaries is 10.7. Broken windows were the most common point of entry in these crimes. Commercial lots were the location of 48 incidents. Thirty cases involved either an SUV, pick-up truck or van. Stereo components were targeted in 20 cases. Six cases involved the theft of seats from SUVs. Other losses reported included laptop computers, cell phones, cash, social security cards, checkbooks, tools, gym bags, credit cards, CDs, identification and briefcases.

## Vehicle Thefts

There were 31 vehicle thefts reported in March, up from 20 in February. There has been an average of 5.3 vehicles stolen each week so far in 2005. Thefts in March varied in the makes and models involved, with the exception of 11 cases in which Toyotas and Hondas were targeted. Twenty incidents occurred in parking lots.

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.