

Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

August 2005

Hardening the Target

Follow tips to protect your vehicle from theft

The 1999 Acura Integra was the most stolen vehicle last year nationwide, and other Integras were not far behind on the list. According to CCC Information Services, Inc., an insurance industry tracker of theft and vehicle damage, stolen Integras are often the targets of street racers who are attracted to the vehicles' fast engines.

CCC Information Services, Inc. compiles its list by comparing loss claims from more than 350 insurers to the total number of vehicles registered to determine the rate of theft.

Acura is Honda Motor Company's luxury brand, and the Integra engine can fit into other Hondas. In Cerritos, Hondas and Toyotas have been at the top of the list of stolen vehicles. This is consistent with statewide data.

While most vehicle thefts occur in a commercial parking lot where there are a variety of vehicles available, an increasing number of thefts in Cerritos have been recorded in residential areas.

There are several ways to secure your vehicle. Relying on a car alarm is no longer enough, as most people fail to pay attention to them anymore when they are triggered.

Using a simple visual deterrent such as a steering wheel locking device helps discourage thieves by sending them a message that taking your car will require more work. Such a device often makes them

search for another vehicle to steal instead.

A kill switch prevents electrical current from reaching the coil or carburetor of a vehicle, and can only be deactivated by a hidden switch. In some cases, an owner may encounter difficulties with warranty issues when kill switches are installed. If this is a problem, consider using a starter bypass switch, which will accomplish the same result.

Use of a fuel switch will interrupt the flow of gas or diesel fuel, and prevent a vehicle from being driven away.

Utilizing tracking devices is also a viable option to protect your vehicle. By using such devices, law enforcement agencies can monitor vehicle movement in the event of activation, and "zero in" on a stolen vehicle.

There are also systems available that utilize global positioning satellites (GPS), which can actually pinpoint the location of your car down to its exact street location. This can be done whether the car is stationary or moving. Both of these services are available for a monthly or annual fee.

The majority of vehicles stolen are taken for transportation purposes. Regardless of what type of vehicle one may possess, everyone can benefit from this information. However, if you own a Honda or Toyota, be extra vigilant, as statistics indicate that you are more likely to become a victim of vehicle theft.

Help prevent auto accidents

Vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for people ages 15 to 20. While teen drivers cause 20 percent of fatal car accidents, drivers of any age can suffer distractions behind the wheel. Motorists often attempt to perform multiple tasks while driving, placing themselves and others on the road in great danger. The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to remind people that driving requires one's undivided attention.

One of the greatest distractions to motorists is cell phone use. Holding a cell phone up to one's ear can often obstruct vision. Using turn signals is frequently neglected by cell phone users, who only have one hand available. Many drivers become so involved in their phone conversations that they lose awareness of the flow of traffic and reduce their speed or start to drift into adjacent lanes. This is very common on freeways and is a significant contributing factor to road rage incidents.

Other items most likely to distract drivers are food, passengers or pets in the vehicle, music, other vehicles on the roadway, reading while driving and scenery.

When driving, be alert at all times and don't allow yourself any type of distraction. This will increase your chances of avoiding an accident and being able to respond more quickly to the actions of other drivers.

Monthly Crime Summary: July 2005

There were 94 Part I felony crimes reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in July. There were 91 cases in June. Calls for service averaged 340 per week in July.

Robberies

There were six robbery incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in July, the same number of incidents reported in June.

On Thursday, July 7 at 6:10 p.m., a woman had her purse wrestled away as she walked in an apartment complex in the 18900 block of Vickie Avenue. Three male juvenile suspects were arrested by deputies shortly after the crime. These suspects have been linked to other purse snatchings at the same complex.

On Wednesday, July 20 at 7:05 p.m., a male juvenile was robbed by a man who displayed a handgun in his waistband in the 11200 block of 183rd Street.

On Friday, July 22 at 7:38 p.m., a male shoplifting suspect exited a retail store in the 20200 block of Bloomfield Avenue and was confronted by loss prevention personnel. The suspect brandished a pocket knife and fled on a bicycle.

On Tuesday, July 26 at 9:15 p.m., a shoplifting suspect in a retail

store located in the 11500 block of South Street was detained by loss prevention personnel when he informed them that he had a gun.

On Saturday, July 30 at 7:44 p.m., a lone gunman robbed a cashier in the same retail store in the 11500 block of South Street and fled with cash.

The final robbery began as a road rage incident on Sunday, July 31 at 4 p.m. in the Los Cerritos Center parking lot. The confrontation led a male suspect to forcibly remove a pair of sunglasses from the other party. Both individuals were arrested.

Residential Burglaries

Twelve residential burglary incidents were reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in July. This is the second lowest number of incidents that has occurred in one month this year. The lowest number of occurrences, seven, was in June. One of the cases in July was an attempted entry only. The 2005 weekly average for residential burglaries is 4.3.

Seven of the cases in July involved open/unlocked doors or windows. One home was being tented for termite control. Stolen items consisted of credit cards, jewelry, a handgun, a shotgun,

a mountain bike, computer components, cell phones, a vehicle and cash. Four suspects were arrested in these crimes and another has been identified.

Vehicle Burglaries

Deputies investigated 38 vehicle burglaries in July. An adjusted figure of 36 such burglaries was reported in June. The weekly average in 2005 was 9.4 at the end of the month. Commercial lots were the location for 25 incidents. Twenty-eight incidents involved an SUV, pick-up truck or van. Stereo components were targeted in 17 cases. Garage door openers, SUV car seats, CDs, credit cards, wallets, laptop computers, check books, a firearm, clothing, purses and tools were among the items reported stolen.

Vehicle Thefts

Thirty vehicle thefts were reported in July, with a weekly average of 5.6. This is a decrease from 39 incidents in June. Parking lots were the venue in 27 crimes. This is by far the preferred location of auto thieves. Ten Hondas and no Toyotas were stolen last month. The other 20 cases involved a wide variety of vehicles. Transportation appeared to be the primary motivation for the thefts.

ATMs installed at Cerritos Sheriff's Station and Cerritos Library

ATMs have been installed in the lobby of the Cerritos Sheriff's Station and in the Cerritos Library across from the circulation desk. With the installation of the ATM at the Sheriff's Station, the community now has access to a safe ATM location 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The ATMs are operated by Southland Credit Union. The ATM in the Sheriff's Station dispenses cash and also accepts deposits from credit union members with the CO-OP symbol on their ATM card. There is no charge for using the ATM for credit union members with this symbol on their card. Patrons with a Star,

Cirrus, Plus, American Express, Visa or Discover symbol on their card may make a withdrawal for a \$1.75 transaction fee (plus any fees their financial institution may charge).

The ATM at the Cerritos Library dispenses cash only and does not accept deposits.

Always use caution and be aware of your surroundings when using an ATM. Below are some tips to follow for ATM safety:

- Prepare any deposit slips before going to an ATM.
- Shield the keypad with your hand or body when entering your personal identification number (PIN).

- Do not leave your transaction record behind at the ATM.
- If you use a drive-up ATM, make sure that all windows of your vehicle are rolled up and the doors are locked.
- If you notice anything suspicious, use another ATM or return at a later time.
- If you must use an ATM at night, try and use the one at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station, or at least consider taking someone with you.

For more safety tips, please visit the Safer Cerritos web site at www.safercerritos.com.

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.