

# Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

January 2005

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

## Beware of latest “phishing” scam

The Cerritos Sheriff’s Station/Community Safety Center has recently received several inquiries regarding Internet scams, or “phishing,” which solicit information from the public. The two scams that have most recently surfaced in Cerritos involve a bank and an investment firm.

Phishing scams involve the mass distribution of e-mail messages containing return addresses, links and branding that appear to come from banks, insurance agencies, retailers and credit card companies.

These fraudulent messages are designed to fool recipients into providing personal information such as account numbers, user names, passwords, credit card numbers

and social security numbers. Because these messages look official, many people respond to them, resulting in financial loss, identity theft or other fraudulent activities.

Never provide personal information requested by an e-mail message or go to a link in an e-mail for the purpose of providing verification information. These e-mail messages look real, as do the phony web sites associated with this practice.

If you are interested in more information about this topic, you can access an on-line article about phishing in “PC Magazine” at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,1407031,00.asp>.

## On-line credit reports available

There is a new federally mandated web site that offers free credit reports from each of the three credit bureaus. Reports can be obtained once every 12 months,

and the site is jointly operated by the credit bureaus Experian, Equifax and Trans Union. This is the only web site where these reports are available. To access your credit report, visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).

Consumers must initiate contact to request their report. None of the agencies involved will try to contact you through the mail or an e-mail message. Beware of those seeking information from you, and avoid making any responses to such requests, as noted in this month’s article on phishing.

## Prevent vehicle burglaries

The most reported felony crime in the City of Cerritos is vehicle burglary. While parking lots are the most common location for these crimes, many have also occurred in residential neighborhoods.

Many of these crimes occur as a result of drivers leaving valuable items visible from the outside in the passenger compartments of their vehicles. These items are very attractive to would-be thieves. Purses, briefcases, laptop computers, wallets, cell phones and cash are among some of the items reported stolen from vehicles.

If you must leave something in your car, lock it in the trunk. Although trunks can be pried open, your chances of becoming a victim are drastically reduced because the item cannot be seen by individuals passing by. If you own an SUV or a pick-up truck, you do not have this option, and criminals are well aware of this fact. The Cerritos Sheriff’s Station/Community Safety Center has seen an increase in these types of vehicles being targeted for burglaries.

Take valuable property with you when you leave your vehicle, or leave it at home or at work. If there is nothing inside of your vehicle worth taking, a thief will most likely not risk breaking into it. Keep this in mind and avoid becoming a victim of vehicle burglary.

## GOT SAFETY?

- A little paranoia is good!
- Live defensively!!
- Harden the target!!!

[www.safercerritos.com](http://www.safercerritos.com)

# Monthly Crime Summary: December 2004

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There were 113 Part I felony crimes investigated by Cerritos Sheriff's deputies in December. This is an increase of 10 incidents compared to November. Increases were noted in robberies, residential burglaries and auto thefts. There was a decrease in vehicle burglaries.

Although crime typically increases during the holiday season, Cerritos experienced 13 percent fewer violent crimes in December compared to the same period in 2003. The final weekly average of calls for service handled by deputies in 2004 was 351.

## **Robberies**

There were nine robbery-related incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in December, an increase from five incidents reported in November.

The first robbery occurred on Friday, December 3 at 12:08 p.m. when a female suspect was shopping in a store located in the 11400 block of South Street. After asking an employee to select and bag items for her, she threw a dollar bill at the employee and grabbed the shopping bag. The suspect then ran from the store and out of sight.

The second incident took place later that same day at 10:48 p.m. in a lot near Gridley Road and South Street. A male suspect approached a female victim, simulated a handgun, and robbed her of cash.

On Friday, December 10 at 3:45 a.m., a male victim was driving on Del Amo Boulevard at Studebaker Road and noticed red and blue lights displayed by a vehicle behind him. Believing that the police were involved, the driver pulled over and was confronted by a female holding a handgun. She entered the victim's car and instructed him to follow the suspect's vehicle, which was being driven by a male. The victim was led to an ATM in an adjacent city where he withdrew cash and gave it to the suspects.

On Sunday, December 12 at 12:50 a.m. at a fast food restaurant in the 11400 block of South Street, three gun-wielding suspects apparently entered a rear door after an employee opened it to take out trash. The three employees were robbed of their personal property after being assaulted by the suspects.

The next incident occurred on Sunday, December 19 at 7:20 p.m. when two male suspects with guns robbed a retail store in the 11300 block of South Street. Employees were ordered to open the store safe. The suspects fled in a vehicle driven by a third male. A search warrant has been served in this case and detectives are working sound leads.

On Tuesday, December 21 at 5:38 p.m., a male suspect with a handgun robbed a fast food restaurant in the 11400 block of South Street and then fled on foot.

The next incident occurred on Wednesday, December 22 at 8:50 p.m. when two teenaged suspects approached a woman in a parking lot in the 10700 block of South Street. One of the youths grabbed the strap of the woman's purse and a struggle ensued. The victim retained possession, and the suspects ran away.

On Wednesday, December 29 at noon, a male teenaged suspect accosted a woman in the parking lot of a bank at Artesia Boulevard and Norwalk Boulevard and used physical force to take her checkbook and cash.

The final incident of the month occurred when a woman was approached by a male suspect displaying a handgun as she stood near her vehicle in the 18700 block of Palo Verde Avenue on Thursday, December 30 at 12:20 a.m. The suspect took her purse and then retrieved a laptop computer and a camera from the woman's vehicle.

## **Residential Burglaries**

Nineteen residential burglaries

were handled by Cerritos deputies in December, compared to 13 in November. The final weekly average in this category for 2004 was 3.5. Twenty more residential burglaries were reported in 2004 compared to the total in 2003.

Thirteen of the 19 cases in December involved entry without force. These entries were made possible by open/unlocked doors or windows. Property reported stolen included cash, jewelry, computer items, cameras, handguns and tools. Personal documents such as social security cards, passports and identification were also taken.

## **Vehicle Burglaries**

There were 43 vehicle burglaries investigated in December, compared to 52 in November. The final weekly average for vehicle burglaries in 2004 was 9.4, a 45 percent increase compared to 2003.

Of the vehicle burglaries reported in December, 29 occurred in commercial parking lots. Twenty-five of the total vehicles burglarized were SUVs, pick-up trucks or mini-vans.

High-end stereo components were not targeted as often as in previous months. The most frequently stolen items were those left visible in passenger compartments, including laptop computers, briefcases, cell phones, purses, wallets, tools, golf clubs and holiday gifts.

## **Vehicle Thefts**

Forty-three vehicles were reported stolen from within the City limits in December, up from an adjusted figure of 33 in November. The final 2004 weekly average of these thefts was 7.7, which represents an increase of nearly 12 percent compared to 2003.

Twenty-nine of the stolen vehicles in December were taken from commercial parking lots. Toyotas manufactured in the 1980s and 1990s were involved in 14 of the cases, and Hondas from the same era were involved in eight of the cases.