

Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

November 2005

Hardening the Target

Protect yourself while shopping this holiday season

With the holidays just around the corner, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center offers 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 to 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.
- Never leave packages, bags, cell phones, purses or other valuable items inside the passenger compartment of your vehicle. Place these items in

your trunk, where they cannot be seen from the outside of your vehicle. Unfortunately, if you own an SUV or pick-up truck, you do not have this option, and thieves are well aware of this.

- Never leave children in your car unattended.
- If possible, always try to shop and walk in pairs. Robbers often focus on and target solo shoppers.
- Carry your purse and belongings on the side of your body that is on the opposite side of traffic.
- 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. Always keep your bags and purses within sight.

- Obtain cash during the day and never use an ATM at night. (See tips below.) For your safety and convenience, an ATM is available for use at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- 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 arriving at your vehicle, make your purse the first item you place inside, preferably on the rear seat floorboard.
- When loading packages or children into your car, always be aware of your surroundings. Keep an eye on purses and other packages and property.
- Never buy items from someone who approaches you in a parking lot. These items are often stolen, substandard or fake.

Follow tips for ATM safety

Following are tips to follow when visiting an ATM:

- Prepare deposit slips before approaching the ATM.
- Shield the keypad on the ATM with your hand or body when entering your personal identification number (PIN).
- Do not leave your transaction record behind at the ATM.
- When using a drive-up ATM, make sure that all of your win-

dows are rolled up and that the doors are locked.

- Always be aware of your surroundings. If you notice anything suspicious, use another ATM or return later.
- If you absolutely must use an ATM at night (and we do not recommend it), consider taking someone with you. Your chances of becoming a victim are much greater if you are by yourself.

Visit www.safercerritos.com

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

There you will find breaking news, personal safety tips, weekly crime summaries, traffic safety tips, and other suggestions for how you can "Harden the Target."

Monthly Crime Summary: October 2005

There were 112 Part I felony crimes investigated by Cerritos Sheriff's personnel in October, compared to 116 in September. While the number of vehicle burglaries and other theft-related crimes was down, an increase was noted in residential burglaries. Field deputies handled an average of 342 calls for service per week by the end of the month.

Robberies

There were 10 robberies investigated by Cerritos deputies in October, the same number of robberies investigated in September.

A female shoplifting suspect was arrested on Saturday, October 1 at 6:15 p.m. after she displayed pepper spray in an attempt to escape loss prevention personnel from a store in the Los Cerritos Center.

At 9:30 p.m. that same night in the 17700 block of Eric Avenue, two teens assaulted another and stole his cell phone.

On Friday, October 7 at 6:25 a.m., a gun-wielding female suspect robbed a coffee shop in the 20200 block of Pioneer Boulevard.

At 10:40 a.m. on Saturday, October 8, a female victim struggled with a male suspect over control of her purse in a grocery store parking lot near Artesia Boulevard and Norwalk Boulevard.

On Saturday, October 15 at 12:45 p.m. in the Los Cerritos Center parking lot, a male suspect grabbed a woman's purse from a stroller as she was placing a child in a car. The suspect ran to an awaiting vehicle and fled.

On Wednesday, October 19 at 12:05 p.m., a male shoplifting suspect struggled with loss prevention personnel outside of a store in the 10900 block of Alondra Boulevard. He fled, but was quickly arrested by deputies after being spotted by a Sheriff's helicopter.

At 8 p.m. on Thursday, October 20, an armed male suspect robbed

a gas station in the 11000 block of South Street.

On Sunday, October 23 at 8:55 p.m., five males entered a fast food restaurant in the 16400 block of Norwalk Boulevard and announced a robbery. As one suspect held a handgun, the others took money from the cash register and employees. The suspects were identified as part of a group that had been responsible for numerous robberies in Los Angeles and Orange counties, and they have since been taken into custody.

Two attempted robberies were reported at the same location and within minutes of each other on Monday, October 24. At 6:15 a.m., a lone gunman approached a pedestrian in the 16700 block of Parkside Avenue and demanded money. When the victim said he didn't have any, the suspect manipulated the slide on the gun and discharged a bullet into the ground. This distracted the suspect and the victim ran away.

Five minutes later, the suspect approached another victim, made the same demand, was told the victim had no money and the victim ran away. The suspect fled on a bicycle.

Residential Burglaries

Forty residential burglaries were reported in October, just three less than the highest amount recorded this year in January. Twenty-four cases were investigated in September.

This unusual increase occurred within the last seven days of the month when 21 cases were investigated. The 2005 weekly average in this category is 5.9.

Nineteen of the homes had open/unlocked doors or windows listed as the entry point. Fourteen of the cases involved sliding glass doors or windows that had been pried open. This was the predominate method of entry in the final week, leading

deputies to believe that a particular group of suspects was working the city as well as a neighboring Orange County jurisdiction that also reported an increase in residential burglaries during the same time frame.

There were also incidents recorded where side garage doors were kicked in to achieve entry into attached garages. Items stolen consisted of jewelry, handguns, cash, computer components, passports, identification, cameras and plasma televisions.

Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries decreased to 31 in October, compared to 52 reported in September. The 2005 weekly average at the end of October was 8.9.

Nearly 22 percent fewer vehicle burglaries have been investigated so far in 2005 compared to 2004.

Sixteen of the vehicle burglaries in October occurred in commercial parking lots. Twelve involved an SUV, pick-up truck, or van, and 10 of the total cases involved the loss of car stereo items.

Other property reported stolen included backpacks, purses, wallets, briefcases, tools, laptop computers, cell phones, clothing, identification, credit cards, cash and jewelry.

Vehicle Thefts

Twenty-eight vehicle thefts were logged in October. There were 21 in September. The 2005 weekly average for vehicle thefts was 5.6 at the end of October, which is nearly 25 percent lower than the total one year ago.

Commercial lots accounted for 21 of the cases. A much lower than normal amount of Hondas (six) and Toyotas (one) were reported stolen in October, compared to previous months.

Five incidents involved tractor/trailers being stolen from industrial areas of the city in cargo thefts, and two motorcycles were reported taken.