

# Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

January 2009

## Hardening the Target

### Protect yourself from identity theft with a document shredder

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center frequently reminds residents of simple and inexpensive ways to avoid becoming a victim of crime. Among the reminders that have been covered in past issues are:

- To install deadbolt locks and locking pins in sliding glass windows and doors to prevent a burglar from entering a residence.
- To always perform an "exit check" before leaving one's residence by inspecting all doors and windows to make sure that they are secure.
- To remove visible items within the passenger compartment of a vehicle so as not to attract potential thieves.
- To purchase and use a steering wheel locking device, which will serve as a visible deterrent to any auto thief targeting your vehicle.

All of the above are easy and inexpensive methods to help you better protect your property.

Another crime that individuals must protect themselves against is identity theft.

When cars are stolen, they are generally replaced in a short period of time. When a cell phone, stereo or wallet is stolen, these items can also quickly be replaced. Lost or stolen credit cards can be canceled with a simple phone call.

Unfortunately, identity theft is one type of crime that can take years to recover from. Restoring your credit

status often requires numerous phone calls and correspondence.

A simple and inexpensive way to avoid becoming a victim of identity theft is by purchasing and using a document shredder. This appliance is helpful in destroying documents that contain account information, social security numbers or any other data that can be used by someone to obtain goods, services or money in your name.

Document shredders can destroy multiple sheets of paper at a time, and some can even shred CDs, DVDs and credit cards. An inexpensive shredder costs between \$20 to \$30 and is a wise investment.

Unsolicited credit card offers are a frequent source of information for criminals looking to establish an

account with your name on it. Law enforcement officials frequently encounter "dumpster divers," or individuals who rummage through trash cans and bins in search of these offers or any other personal identification documents that have been carelessly discarded.

This is known to occur in both residential and business communities. Social security numbers, account numbers and driver's license numbers are sold to individuals who use the information to establish accounts or make purchases on an existing account.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center encourages residents and business owners to invest in a document shredder and to use it wisely.

### Opt out of pre-screened credit offers

Are you tired of receiving pre-screened credit offers in the mail? These offers are based on information in your credit report that indicates you meet certain criteria, making you desirable to companies that offer credit. While these offers may be flattering as an indicator of your financial responsibility, they can also make you vulnerable to becoming a victim of a crime involving your identity. Thieves are known to look for these offers and apply using your name with a different address.

If you do not want to receive pre-screened offers of credit, call the consumer reporting agencies' toll

free number at (888) 5-OPT-OUT (567-8688) or write them individually at the following addresses:

- Experian Target Marketing  
P.O. Box 919  
Allen, TX 75013
- Equifax Options  
P.O. Box 740123  
Atlanta, GA 30374
- Trans Union Corporation  
ATTN: Marketing Opt-Out  
P.O. Box 97328  
Jackson, MS 39288

# Monthly Crime Summary: December 2008

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Cerritos Sheriff's deputies investigated 135 Part I felony crimes in December, one incident less than the total in November. Increases were noted in robberies, vehicle burglaries and vehicle thefts, while residential burglaries decreased. At the end of 2008, the weekly average for calls for service was 296.

## Robberies

There were eight robbery incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in December, compared to seven in November.

On Thursday, December 4 at 5:00 p.m. two male suspects "tricked" a male victim into withdrawing a large sum of money. The suspects eventually took the money by force while in a lot in the 17500 block of Carmenita Road.

On Saturday, December 6 at 6:45 p.m. two male suspects robbed a female victim at gunpoint near New Falcon Way and Studebaker Road.

At 9:18 p.m. that same evening, a female was pushed to the floor of her open garage in the 17400 block of Harvest Avenue and her purse was taken.

A female suspect with a simulated

handgun robbed a bank in the Los Cerritos Center on Monday, December 15 at 2:03 p.m.

On Friday, December 19 at 7:00 a.m. a male suspect grabbed and wrestled away a backpack worn by a victim in the Towne Center.

Two gun-wielding male suspects robbed a convenience store in the 19900 block of Pioneer Boulevard on Monday, December 22 at 10:45 p.m.

On Wednesday, December 24 at 9:30 p.m. a male victim was robbed by a lone male suspect holding a handgun as the victim sat in a vehicle in the 11000 block of Bingham Street.

A teenaged female victim was walking on 183rd Street at Deloise Avenue on Friday, December 26 at 1:20 p.m. when a teenaged male suspect pushed her and grabbed the cell phone from her hand.

## Residential Burglaries

Residential burglaries dropped from 19 cases in November to 15 in December. Open/unlocked doors or windows provided access for eight of the crimes. Pried windows were used to gain entry in seven incidents. One case was attributed to a

shattered window and another to a side garage door that was kicked in. Items reported stolen included handguns, laptop computers, jewelry, cash, TVs and cameras. The final 2008 weekly average in residential burglaries was 3.4.

## Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries rose to 53 in December, up from 44 in November. High-volume commercial parking lots were the crime scenes in 44 of the burglaries. SUVs were involved in 41 of the cases. GPS units were taken in 12 of the cases, and stereo items were targeted in nine. Other items reported stolen consisted of DVD players, credit cards, sunglasses, keys, purses, TVs, checkbooks and cell phones. The weekly average in vehicle burglaries at the end of 2008 was 8.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts rose from 17 in November to 24 in December. Twenty-two vehicles were taken from high-volume commercial parking lots. Eight SUVs, 16 Hondas and a Toyota were stolen. The 2008 weekly average in vehicle thefts ended at 5.4.

## Monitor your credit card and bank statements

When checking your credit card and bank statements, pay particular attention to each recorded transaction and make sure that the information is correct. With the flurry of activity during the holidays, it may be easier to miss something that could reveal unauthorized use.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center recommends that you scrutinize your bills each month or each time you access an account online. Remember that an annual credit report can be obtained for free. This is yet another method to spot unauthorized activities in time to fix your credit rating.

## Trapping healthy wildlife prohibited

The City of Cerritos contracts with Long Beach Animal Care Services Bureau to capture wildlife that is sick, injured, or poses a public health or safety risk.

Long Beach Animal Care Services Bureau encourages the healthy co-existence of the public and natural wildlife. The California Code of Regulations states that the trapping and destruction of healthy wildlife is strictly prohibited. Any healthy wildlife trapped in the City of Long Beach or a contract city must be released immediately within the area it was trapped.

Residents are encouraged to visit the City of Long Beach website for more information about living with

wildlife: [www.longbeach.gov/acs](http://www.longbeach.gov/acs).

The California Code of Regulations (CCR) 679.(f)(4) states the following:

"Any healthy wildlife trapped in towns or cities or removed from under buildings or otherwise taken or trapped in accordance with Section 4152 or 4180, Fish and Game Code shall be immediately released in the area where trapped or disposed of as directed or authorized by the department. Any such wildlife that has been determined by a veterinarian to be so seriously ill that it cannot be treated shall be euthanized and tested as directed by the appropriate county public health agency or the department."

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Safety Contacts:  
Community Safety Division -  
(562) 916-1266  
Sheriff's Station - (562) 860-0044



To join Cerritos Neighborhood Watch, call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center at (562) 916-1266.