

Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

March 2009

Hardening the Target

Be street smart to avoid becoming a victim

As we go about our daily lives, we often get caught up in thought or distracted by someone or something. While in most instances this is not a real problem, there are a few considerations to keep in mind if you are out in public. Safety is number one, and you want to make sure that you are not being evaluated by a criminal as a potential crime victim. The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to offer the following tips to help you stay safe.

- Don't daydream. Wherever you are, stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Look around frequently.
- Communicate the message that you are calm, confident, and know where you are going.

Stand tall, walk purposefully, and make quick eye contact with people around you.

- Stick to well-lighted busy streets and lots. Stay on the part of the sidewalk that is farthest away from shrubs, dark doorways and alleys where people can hide.
- If you walk at night, do so with a companion and vary your routes each day.
- If you work late, arrange to leave with a co-worker or be accompanied by a security guard. Make sure that your vehicle is parked as close to the entrance as possible or move it to a safe spot in the late afternoon when people are leaving.
- Keep your vehicle locked and check the vicinity as you ap-

proach it. Look at the seating areas and floorboards before getting in.

- Don't overload yourself with packages and avoid wearing clothes or shoes that may restrict your movement.
- Avoid displaying large amounts of money or other tempting items such as jewelry, cell phones or clothing.
- While there are no absolute guarantees that you will never become a crime victim, there are steps that you can take to reduce that likelihood. The most effective weapons against crime are common sense, alertness and a few basic precautions that remove you from the "target list."

Traffic safety reminders offered

- When you are stopped at a red light and it turns green, wait for a second or two before you enter the intersection. If a vehicle is going to run a red light, it will almost always do so in the first second or two after the light turns red.
- When making a left turn at an intersection, always yield to vehicles approaching in the opposite direction. Motorcycles can be difficult to see. Left turn accidents are some of the most frequently investigated in Cer-

ritos and could be avoided by drivers paying closer attention.

- Use your turn signals whenever you make a turn or a lane change. Although this sounds rather simple, it could prevent you from being involved in an accident. Always leave plenty of distance between your vehicle and the vehicle traveling in front of you. As a general rule, allow one car length for every 10 miles per hour. This will give you enough time to react, brake and

stop safely without a collision.

- Be aware of your speed. Speed is almost always related in some way to most accidents. Driving at the posted speed limit will also keep you from getting a citation.
- Do not park in marked fire lanes.
- If you do not have a placard or disabled persons' license plate, do not park in a stall designated for disabled parking only. The fine is more than \$300, and your vehicle may be towed away.

Monthly Crime Summary: February 2009

Cerritos Sheriff's Station personnel investigated 132 Part I felonies in February, up from 125 in January. Robberies, vehicle burglaries and vehicle thefts increased slightly while residential burglaries decreased. Field deputies were handling an average of 313 calls for service per week at the end of the month.

Robberies

There were four robbery incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in February, compared to three in January.

A male suspect approached a female in a lot in the 11500 block of South Street on Thursday, February 5 at 9:00 p.m. After engaging the victim in a conversation, he grabbed her purse and struggled with her before gaining control of the purse and fleeing.

A female victim was loading items in her vehicle, which was parked in the 17600 block of Palo Verde Avenue on Monday, February 16 at 10:30 a.m. when she was approached by a gun-wielding male suspect. After demanding and receiving money, the suspect fled on foot.

On Sunday, February 22 at 7:15 p.m. a similarly described suspect approached another female as she was inside her open garage in the 17700 block of Palo Verde Avenue. Her purse was relinquished after the suspect produced a handgun.

A male suspect with a handgun confronted a female victim at a residence in the 18700 block of Del Rio Place on Friday, February 27 at 6:35 p.m. The suspect took her purse, which contained cash and credit cards.

Residential Burglaries

Residential burglaries dropped from 20 cases in January to nine in February. Open/unlocked doors or windows were the entry points in six of last month's crimes. In addition, two garage padlocks were cut and one rear window was smashed. Property reported missing included TVs, golf clubs, DVD players, laptop computers, jewelry, cash and cell phones. The new 2009 weekly average in residential burglaries is 2.7.

Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries increased by two cases in February as 32 were investigated. High-volume commercial parking lots were the

crime scenes in 26 of the incidents. Twenty-five SUVs were targeted, GPS units were stolen from six vehicles, and stereo items were taken from three vehicles. Briefcases, sunglasses, tools, laptop computers, cell phones, backpacks, gym bags, CDs and a fire extinguisher were also reported stolen. The 2009 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is now 8.0.

Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts were up slightly in February, as 30 cases were recorded, compared to 27 in January. Twenty-five vehicles were taken from high-volume commercial parking lots. Eight SUVs and 12 Hondas were taken. The new 2009 weekly average in vehicle thefts is 7.3.

Sheriff's Station under construction

Expansion of the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center is currently under way. The expansion includes approximately 6,750 square feet of additional office space, an expanded Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and 2,250 square feet of additional improvements. Upon completion, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station will be comprised of 72,500 square feet of finished space.

The contractor is currently completing additional demolition at the west elevation, and will soon begin shoring operations. Once the shoring is completed, excavation will commence for the construction of the mid-level basement expansion. A temporary, wood-framed, partially elevated tunnel was recently constructed to provide the public with access to the Sheriff's Station and Community Safety counters.

The construction is scheduled to be completed by December.

Safeguard your vehicle and property when parked at a fitness center

Fitness center parking lots are prime targets for vehicle burglaries. Thieves know that members are often reluctant to use the lockers for their personal items, and will often leave them in vehicles. Statistics show that vehicle burglaries in fitness center lots occur far more often than burglaries of fitness center lockers. The two major fitness centers in Cerritos are frequently the site of vehicle burglaries.

The best way to protect your credit cards, cash, and other important valuable items is to leave them at home before you go work-out. Carry

your driver's license, keys and a small amount of cash with you inside the gym when you go from machine to machine. These items are much easier to control and will remain secure in your immediate possession.

If you are stopping by the gym on the way home and absolutely MUST leave items in your vehicle, make sure to lock them in the trunk. This does not necessarily mean the property will be completely safe, but at least the items will not be visible from passers-by. If you have a van, pick-up, or an SUV, this option is not available.

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.