

Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

November 2009

Hardening the Target

Beware of property tax scam

With property tax season upon us, the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Division would like to warn residents about a property tax scam that has been gaining popularity in recent months.

The Los Angeles County Assessor's office reports that various private companies are sending mailings to property owners offering their services to pursue a reduction in their property taxes for a hefty fee. Several Cerritos residents have received these notices. Some companies are even imposing late fees if the application is received after an arbitrary deadline. Be aware that solicitations from private companies offering to pursue a reduction in property taxes must clearly

indicate that they are not a government agency and that their services are not approved or endorsed by any government agency. Failure to provide such notice is a violation of California law.

If you or someone you know receives an illegal solicitation, please contact the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs at (800) 973-3370 or visit www.dca.lacounty.gov.

Property owners may receive legal solicitations from private companies that properly identify themselves as not being government agencies. However, in 2009, the Assessor's Office reviewed over 500,000 single family houses and condos that were purchased be-

tween July 2003 and June 2008. In some areas, earlier purchases were also assessed. There was no charge for the review.

All 500,000 owners whose homes were scheduled to be reviewed should have received a letter by the end of June notifying them of the results. Owners who disagree with the results of the review or were not included in the review may file a free Decline-In-Value application through December 31. The Decline-In-Value form is simple to complete and is readily available on-line or at one of the Assessor's District Offices. The Assessor's office will review the application and if a reduction is warranted, the taxable value will be reduced.

For more information, contact the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office at (888) 807-2111 or visit assessor.lacounty.gov.

Be cautious when donating to a charity

During the holiday season, many people are in the spirit of giving, and criminals are more than willing to do the taking. Though there are many legitimate charities, criminals pretend to be from charities as well. The following tips are offered when considering a charitable donation:

- Be aware of charities soliciting personal information on the phone or by mail. This information can be used to deplete savings accounts, "max out" credit cards, and could ultimately lead to identity theft.
- Before you make a donation, check out the charity. If you do not recognize its name, do some research before donating or pledging money.
- Ask for written information, or consider only dealing with charities that you are familiar with. Legitimate charities will gladly send you information and will never insist that you donate immediately.
- If the caller is from a professional fundraising group, ask how much of the donation actually goes to the charity and how much the fundraising group keeps. You may prefer to give directly to the charity.
- Remember, you are the one making the donation and you have every right to obtain information and control the way you donate.

Prevent vehicle burglary by NEVER leaving any valuable items inside the passenger compartment of your vehicle.

If you absolutely must leave valuables in your vehicle, lock them in the trunk. However, if you own an SUV or pick-up truck, you do not have this option, and thieves know it!

Monthly Crime Summary: October 2009

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station investigated 93 Part I felonies in October, down from 110 in September. Crimes in all of the following categories decreased in October. At the end of October, field deputies were handling a weekly average of 326 calls for service in 2009.

Robberies

There were three robbery incidents investigated by Cerritos deputies in October, compared to six in September.

On Thursday, October 1 at 12:45 p.m. a woman was walking in a lot in the 13300 block of South Street when a male suspect grabbed her purse and pushed her to the ground. He fled to an awaiting car, which exited the lot. The suspect was later arrested.

The second incident occurred on Friday, October 23 at 12:30 p.m. at a kiosk in the Los Cerritos Center.

A female customer in the process of picking up a sized ring grabbed it from the clerk and fled without paying. She was arrested shortly after.

The last case of the month was reported on Friday, October 30 at 3 p.m. A male juvenile grabbed a cell phone from another male juvenile in the 12500 block of Bloomfield Avenue and ran northbound. He was quickly arrested by an arriving deputy.

Residential Burglaries

Twelve residential burglaries were reported in October, down by one from September. Open/unlocked doors or windows were the points of entry in seven of the cases. In addition, four doors or windows were pried open and one window was shattered. Credit cards, tools, laptop computers, cameras, jewelry and cash were taken. The 2009 weekly average in residential burglaries was 2.4 at the end of the month.

Vehicle Burglaries

Twenty-eight vehicle burglaries were logged in October, down from 34 the previous month. Fourteen of the vehicles were burglarized in high-volume commercial parking lots and 14 were burglarized in residential tracts. Twenty-one SUVs were targeted, resulting in the theft of third row seats from three of the vehicles. Three victims reported the loss of GPS units. Additional items taken included backpacks, cameras, tools, purses, a stroller, suitcases and cash. The 2009 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is now 7.6.

Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts dropped from 15 in September to 11 in October. Ten were stolen from high-volume commercial parking lots. Six SUVs, three Hondas and a Toyota were taken. The new 2009 weekly average in vehicle thefts is 4.5.

Stay safe and be responsible this holiday season

Every year since 1981, the President of the United States has proclaimed December "National Drunk Driving Prevention Month." The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center wishes to remind everyone to always designate a sober driver before each holiday event involving alcohol consumption.

Nationally, nearly 12,000 people died in alcohol-related highway crashes during 2008. While this is down nearly 10 percent from 2007, hundreds of thousands more are injured each year. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives. Designating a sober driver in advance is just one of several simple steps to ensure that those who have been drinking will arrive at their destination safely and avoid risking arrest for driving under the influence of alcohol.

The following holiday safety tips are offered:

- Don't even think about driving if you have been drinking.
- If you are impaired, call a cab, use mass transit or call a family member or friend to come pick you up.
- Consider staying where you are and sleep until you are sober.
- If you are sober and your friend is impaired, take the keys and do not let the friend leave your sight.

If you serve alcoholic beverages in your home this holiday season, you are responsible for the welfare of your guests. If you neglect to pay attention to your partygoers, you risk very serious legal ramifications if an alcohol-related collision occurs. If your guests plan on drinking, remind them to make transportation arrangements ahead of time. Remember, people do not like to admit that they are impaired, and may argue that they are okay to drive. Share with your friends that impairment begins with the very first drink, and remind them of the penalties they

face if convicted of driving under the influence.

If you are hosting a party this holiday season, the following safety tips are offered:

- Encourage guests to eat food if they are drinking.
- Offer alcohol-free beverages and make sure that all of your guests leave with a sober driver.
- If you serve an alcoholic punch, use a non-carbonated base.
- Never serve alcohol to anyone less than 21 years of age.
- Don't ride in a vehicle with anyone who is impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Have a designated driver for all party events.

Driving impaired or riding with someone that is impaired is simply not worth the risk. The consequences are serious and real. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired can be significant.

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.