

Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

April 2010

Hardening the Target

Know the risks and common themes in Internet scams

The National Crime Prevention Council offers the following information related to the evolution of technology and crime prevention.

Technological advances now allow people to carry out the most mundane of tasks, such as ordering groceries from the store, to the most complex activities, such as performing complicated surgery, all from a separate, remote location: a computer connected to the Internet.

Since its beginnings in the 1990s, the Internet has grown into a vast electronic network that now spans the entire globe. Because people use the Internet for daily activities, they rely on it for a safe and accurate exchange of information.

Personal data such as Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, and passwords are constantly traveling through wires and through the air from one computer to another. With security measures in place to protect on-line information, most people feel safe on the Internet and trust that their personal information will remain confidential. Unfortunately, criminals have also adapted to advancements in technology and are targeting Internet users.

The evolution of Internet crime

For years, criminals have been using discarded credit card receipts, bank statements, tax notices and other bills (often found in the trash) to gain the personal information necessary to assume another person's identity. With the technol-

ogy available today, these criminals have devised cunning new methods of theft in the form of cyber crimes. Now, computer hacking and e-mail scams known as phishing are part of the risk of sharing information online.

Computer hackers are able to enter prohibited areas of the Internet and access computer networks. Once they are inside a network, they are able to view documents, files and confidential data and use it for their own personal gain.

Phishing is a method in which people are duped into providing their own personal data to a thief who is posing as a legitimate business or agency. Instances of these cyber crimes have been steadily rising in recent years. According to the Wall Street Journal, there were more than 9.9 million cases of identity theft last year in the United States.

Hacking into your life

One example of the growing computer hacking problem emerged in February 2005 when an information broker, ChoicePoint Inc., announced that an identity theft ring had hacked into its database and gained access to hundreds of thousands of personal documents. Some of the information that was stolen included full names, Social Security numbers, home addresses, and credit reports.

Many other large corporations such as T-Mobile USA were also recently hacked, and had their cli-

ents' information stolen. The United States Senate will soon hold hearings to determine whether these corporations and information brokers require more extensive regulation.

Don't get hooked by a phishing scam

Phishing is currently on the rise around the world. Phishing works because scammers are able to construct bogus e-mails, pop-up ads and even websites that appear to be from legitimate businesses or agencies. They inspire a false sense of trust, then send out e-mails asking for personal and financial data so they can steal identities.

Some phishing e-mails may even install software on your computer that could be used to redirect your computer to bogus websites. Be extremely cautious of whom you trust with personal information on the Internet. You should know that legitimate businesses will never ask you to provide nor confirm any personal information through an e-mail or pop-up message.

Tips to protect yourself and the Internet

The Internet can be a powerful tool, and the convenience it offers to manage business and recreation is invaluable. However, theft and fraud are damaging the positive reputation of the Internet as a medium for business.

The following steps will decrease your chances of becoming a victim, and may help catch cyber-criminals

Continued on the other side

Monthly Crime Summary: March 2010

There were 88 Part I felony crimes investigated by Cerritos Sheriff's Station personnel in March, down from 97 in February. Vehicle burglaries and vehicle thefts remained the same as in February, and robberies and residential burglaries declined. Field deputies were handling a monthly average of 299 calls for service at the end of March.

Robberies

There was one robbery reported in March, down from five in February.

A male victim was walking on Studebaker Road near South Street on Sunday, March 14 at 9:45 p.m. when two male suspects came up behind him and took his wallet, cell phone and lunch box. The suspects fled to an awaiting vehicle.

Residential Burglaries

Six residential burglaries were recorded in March, down from 11 in February. Open/unlocked doors or windows were used as entry points in four of the crimes. In addition, one

window was shattered and one was pried open. Luggage, jewelry, TVs, cameras and cash were reported missing. The new 2010 weekly average in residential burglaries is 2.1.

Vehicle Burglaries

Twenty-five vehicle burglaries were reported in March, the same total as February. Twenty of the March crimes occurred in high-volume commercial parking lots. Fourteen involved SUVs, four victims reported GPS units taken, and three victims listed high-end stereo components as the loss. Tools, credit cards, cameras, clothing, cell phones, wallets, purses, briefcases, gym bags, ID, garage door openers and makeup were also taken. The 2010 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is now 7.4.

Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts also remained the same as in February after 20 were logged.

Fifteen of the vehicles were stolen

from high-volume commercial parking lots. Five SUVs, 10 Hondas and two Toyotas were among the stolen vehicles. The 2010 weekly average in vehicle thefts was 4.9 at the end of March.

Attend the Neighborhood Watch Town Hall Meeting

Cerritos residents and community members are invited to attend the next Neighborhood Watch Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, June 9 at 7 p.m. at the Cerritos Senior Center.

Those in attendance will hear a briefing on recent crime trends in Cerritos.

The meeting is sponsored by the City's Community Safety Division and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. For more information, call (562) 916-1266.

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Continued from the other side

at work:

- Be aware that there are people on-line who would like to gain access to your personal information. Do not share this information unless you have initiated the exchange or are absolutely sure of who is receiving it.
- Install security and scanning software onto your computer to protect it from on-line hacking.
- Do not use your name, date of birth, address or any other personal information in a password. These passwords can be easily cracked by hackers. In addition, passwords should not consist of a word that is found in the dictionary, as there are hacking programs that will attempt every

word in the dictionary.

- Never disclose personal information in response to an e-mail. Legitimate businesses would never ask you to do this. If an e-mail or pop-up ad requests you to confirm personal information, even if it looks genuine, it is an example of phishing and should be reported to reportphishing@antiphishing.org, the attorneys at the Securities and Exchange Commission at enforcement@sec.gov, and to the Federal Trade Commission at uce@ftc.gov.
- If you are concerned about an e-mail you receive from a company, contact that company by phone to verify the information.

- When giving personal information over a website, check to make sure that the site is secure. Look at the first part of the web address in your browser. It should read <https://> and not <http://>
- Regularly check your credit card and bank statements and keep track of your transactions. Also, check your on-line accounts frequently. This way, you will be able to notice any changes to your account soon after it happens.

If you are careful not to reveal personal information on-line, and help make others aware of the risks, you will be playing a part in making the Internet a safer place for everyone.

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.