

# Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

June 2011

## Hardening the Target

### Avoid telephone service scams

Telemarketing fraud is a crime that affects millions of Americans every year. The following tips are offered to help you avoid a telephone service-related scam:

“Slamming” is when your long-distance telephone service is switched to another company without your permission. It can happen in many ways. You may receive a check in the mail, or enter a contest, not realizing that the fine print says that by signing the check or the entry form you have agreed to change your phone service. Or you may get a call offering you lower rates and, even if you haven’t agreed, find out later that you’ve been switched. Look at your phone bill carefully. If a different long-distance company is listed, call your local phone company to find out how to get switched back with no fee and how to be re-billed at your original long-distance company’s rates. If you get a call from someone claiming to be from your phone company, ask for their name and call-back phone number, then call the number on the back of your phone bill to verify that the person was legitimate.

Don’t Be “Crammed.” When monthly charges pop up on your telephone bill for optional services that you never authorized such as voice mail, paging, a personal 800 number or club membership, it’s called “cramming.” Like slamming, it can happen by filling out a contest entry form, failing to respond to a negative option sales pitch, or calling a 900 number. Or the cram-

mer may simply pick your phone number out of the blue and place charges on your bill through your local telephone company, claiming that you agreed to purchase the services. Look at your bill closely every month. Charges for optional services should be itemized and show the name of the company providing them and its toll-free number. If you did not authorize the services, call that number and insist that they be canceled and the charges removed from your bill. If the “crammer” agrees, let your local telephone company know. If it refuses or you can’t get through, notify your local carrier that you’re disputing the charges. Be sure to pay your bill on time, subtracting the disputed amount and any taxes or fees associated with it. Your phone service should not be disconnected, but be aware that the “crammer” can refer the matter to a collection agency.

Toll fraud occurs when someone charges their long-distance calls to your number. If your calling card is stolen, calls to places all over the world can be charged to your calling card. Don’t let people see you dialing your calling card number and report a stolen card right away. In another type of toll fraud scam, you may receive a call from someone pretending to be from a phone company or a government agency claiming to be investigating a phone problem and asking you to accept charges for a call. No legitimate company or agency would ask you to do this. Hang up immediately.

Prepaid phone cards are sometimes worthless or more expensive to use than coins or collect calls. Beware of cards that do not come with clear information about the rates for the calls. Comparison shop for the best rates and find out if there are fees or surcharges that might apply. Choose companies that provide toll-free numbers for 24-hour customer service.

Claims of savings by using “dial-around” access numbers may be phoney. Those seven-digit numbers that you can dial to get around your regular long-distance phone company to save money could result in higher charges, not lower, if there are added fees or calling minimums. Get all of the details and compare both the rates and the terms before you use an access code to place your long-distance calls through another company.

Learn to recognize the signs of telemarketing fraud, like callers who ask for money first or who want to know your bank account, credit card or social security number. Scammers may even have your billing information before they call you. Often, they’re trying to get you to say okay so they can claim you approved a charge.

If you have been scammed - or you think someone is trying to scam you - report it to the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov). It’s more helpful to the FTC if you can give the name or the phone number of the company that called you and

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# Monthly Crime Summary: May 2011

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The Cerritos Sheriff's Station investigated 104 Part I felony crimes in May, up from 89 in April. Residential burglaries, vehicle burglaries and vehicle thefts increased, while robberies remained the same. The 2011 weekly average in calls for service was 262 at the end of May.

## Robberies

There were five robberies investigated by Cerritos deputies in May, the same number as in April.

At 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 3, a male suspect grabbed a necklace worn by an employee of a fast-food restaurant in the 11800 block of Del Amo Boulevard and struggled with other employees when he attempted to flee. He was successfully detained and arrested by deputies.

The second case occurred at 7:20 p.m. the same evening in the 20200 block of Bloomfield Avenue after a male shoplifting suspect fought with loss prevention personnel attempting to detain him. He was also arrested by deputies.

On Saturday, May 7 at 11:50 a.m. three suspects entered a jewelry store in the Los Cerritos Center and smashed display cabinets. After removing numerous watches, they attempted to escape in a vehicle but a pursuit by Cerritos deputies was initiated that resulted in the arrest of

two of the suspects and the recovery of all the stolen items.

On Saturday, May 14 at 2:40 p.m., loss prevention personnel attempted to detain two suspects after a shoplifting incident at a store in the Towne Center when one of the suspects used pepper spray on an employee. One suspect managed to escape but the other was successfully detained and arrested. The property taken consisted of TVs, which were recovered.

On Sunday, May 29 at 1 p.m., two female shoplifting suspects fought with loss prevention personnel outside of a store in the Towne Center in an attempt to escape. Both suspects were arrested.

## Residential Burglaries

There were 21 residential burglaries logged in May compared to 12 in April. Open/unlocked doors or windows were used as points of entry in 11 of the May cases. In addition, eight sliding windows were pried open and two front doors were kicked in. Items reported stolen included a safe, boots, purses, jewelry, cash, guns, cameras, TVs and DVDs. The new 2011 weekly average in residential burglaries was 3.7 at the end of May.

## Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries rose from 23

in April to 32 in May. High-volume commercial parking lots were the crime scenes in 21 of the May incidents, and 21 cases involved SUVs. Property reported taken included DVD players and third-row seats from SUVs, backpacks, MP3 players, tools, clothes, cell phones, sunglasses, cash and a surfboard. The new 2011 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is 5.6.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts also increased from 14 in April to 16 in May. All of the vehicles were stolen from high-volume parking lots. Six SUVs, four Hondas and three Toyotas were stolen. The new 2011 weekly average in vehicle thefts is 2.7.

## Neighborhood Watch Town Hall Meeting set for August 17

Cerritos residents and community members are invited to attend the next Neighborhood Watch Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, August 17 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. For crime prevention tips, emergency preparedness information and community safety links, visit [www.safercerritos.com](http://www.safercerritos.com).

## Home safety tip

Make sure to always close and lock all doors and windows before leaving your residence.

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the date they called. Complaints against telephone companies can also be reported to the California Public Utilities Commission at [www.cpuc.ca.gov/puc/](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/puc/).

Never give out personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you are the one that initiated the contact and are aware of the party

you are dealing with. Be cautious of those posing as bank representatives, credit card company personnel, phone company operators and even governmental officials that are seeking this personal information from you. It never hurts to get their phone number to verify validity and call them back.

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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.