

# Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

March 2011

## Hardening the Target

### Be cautious when asked to reveal your credit or debit card CSV number

When you order something online, you are frequently asked for the three numbers on the back of your credit card in the strip provided for a signature (called the CSV number). This is to ensure that you have the card in your possession and that someone is not using a number obtained from the theft of mail, a receipt or some other illegitimate source.

A common scam to obtain one's CSV number involves a person representing a security or fraud investigator from your credit card company. They will ask you about a fraudulent purchase in an attempt to gain your trust, and then ask you a series of questions. One will be to provide this CSV number. Your CSV number will then be used to help the scam artist make fraudulent on-line purchases using your card.

If you receive a call like this, always tell the security department that you will call them back before you provide any information. Use the toll-free number on your credit card and make sure that the caller gives you a name or operator number so you will know whom to contact. If the call is a scam, the person on the phone will not be able to provide you with this information.

### 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. This is especially important if you are talking on a cell phone.
- 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. Avoid shortcuts and dark, isolated areas.
- If you walk at night, do so with a companion and vary your routes each day.
- If you are walking to a vehicle, have your keys ready in your hand.
- If you feel you are being followed as you walk to your vehicle, do not go to your vehicle.

Continue to a populated area and summon help.

- If a driver asks you for directions, don't get too close to the car.
- 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 approach 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.
- Hold your purse tightly, close to your body. Keep your wallet in a front or buttoned hip pocket or side coat pocket. When walking in a parking lot, carry your purse on the side that is closest to parked vehicles.
- 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."

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# Monthly Crime Summary: February 2011

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There were 80 Part I felony crimes reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in February, down from 101 in January. In February, robberies, residential burglaries and vehicle burglaries decreased, but vehicle thefts increased. Field deputies handled a weekly average of 252 calls for service at the end of February.

## Robberies

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

At 1:45 p.m. on Thursday, February 10, two male teens approached another male teen at Abana Street and Gridley Avenue and took his backpack at knifepoint.

At 7 p.m. the same evening, a male suspect displayed a handgun in the 13200 block of 166th Street and

robbed a male adult victim of cash.

One attempted robbery was reported after a male victim was accosted by a lone male suspect at 10 p.m. on Thursday, February 24 in the 12200 block of Stillwater Lane. The suspect produced a knife, and after a brief struggle, fled without any of the victim's property.

## Residential Burglaries

Residential burglaries dropped from 20 in January to 13 in February. Open/unlocked doors or windows were the entry points in seven of the incidents. In addition, four windows were shattered and two were pried open. Shoes, video games, handguns, laptop computers, jewelry and cash were among the items reported stolen. The new 2011 weekly average in residential burglaries was 3.8 at the end of February.

## Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries decreased from 26 in January to 22 in February. Eighteen of the crimes occurred in high-volume commercial parking lots. Sixteen SUVs were targeted. Five stereos and two GPS units were stolen, along with third-row seats from SUVs, MP3 players, credit cards, purses, wallets, cell phones, personal checks, bicycles, guitars, amplifiers and backpacks. The new 2011 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is now 5.8.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts increased to 11 compared to nine in January. Five vehicles were taken from high-volume commercial parking lots. Four SUVs and two Toyotas were among the stolen vehicles. The new 2011 weekly average in vehicle thefts is 2.3.

## Take steps to prevent a residential burglary

A reoccurring theme in residential burglaries is when a resident was inside the home when an individual began knocking at the front door. The resident chose not to answer and the person knocking continued to do so for a few more moments. Soon the suspect was prying open a side garage door. After entering the home, the suspect met face-to-face with the resident and subsequently fled. Fortunately the occupant was not harmed.

The practice of knocking at a front door for a period of time is a well-known means of determining if someone is inside before proceeding to the next step of attempting entry. This form of reconnaissance or "casing" has been used on a number of occasions in Cerritos in the past few years. Exactly how often is unable to be determined as the information comes from those inside at the time of the attempted entry. There is no way to know how

many completed residential burglaries started out this way.

Oftentimes residents will not answer the door to avoid what can be an uncomfortable contact with a solicitor. In other instances they may peer through the peephole and not recognize the individual. Since burglars are by nature sneaky and non-confrontational, in either case the wrong signal could have been sent and an attempt to enter could follow.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center recommends that if you do not want to answer the door that you somehow let the person know that the home is occupied. Make a noise that you know can be heard from the front door. This could include turning on a radio or TV, shutting a door, or even hitting two pans together. There is nothing wrong with approaching the door from the inside and announcing that this is not a good time for you

and that you are not interested. Both of these methods just told the person knocking that the home is occupied and is therefore not a good target for a residential burglary. Make sure that you watch the activity of the person so you will know if he or she comes around to the side of the home, makes an attempt to open a gate, goes next door, etc. If the person does not go away, call 911 immediately and be prepared to provide a description of the suspect when talking to Sheriff's desk personnel. Listen to the directions given, which may include leaving the home.

Steps have been taken by the Cerritos Sheriff's Station to reduce the residential burglary rate, but catching burglars depends on a partnership between law enforcement and residents. Don't hesitate to call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044 when a person is going door-to-door. It could be someone casing your neighborhood.

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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.