

Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

February 2012

Hardening the Target

Prevent a residential burglary

In a common residential burglary scenario, a burglar begins knocking at the front door while the resident is inside. The resident chooses not to answer, causing the burglar to continue knocking for a few more moments. The suspect then pries open a side garage door. After entering the home, the suspect meets face-to-face with the resident and subsequently flees. In most cases, the occupant is 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.

If the person leaves after hearing you inside the home, we recommend that you call the business line at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044. This allows deputies the opportunity to contact the person and confirm their legitimacy. Please note the description of the person(s), any vehicle involved, and the direction of travel.

Steps have been taken by the Cerritos Sheriff's Station to reduce the residential burglary rate, but residents can help law enforcement catch burglars. Call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station when you suspect that a person is casing your neighborhood.

Drive safely in residential areas

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to offer the following tips while driving in a residential neighborhood:

Be more attentive

Most of the time when we drive in a residential neighborhood, it is our own. Familiarity can cause relaxation and inattentiveness.

Slow down

The slower you drive, the fewer feet per second your vehicle travels. When your vehicle is covering ground at a slower pace, your reaction time is increased.

Be patient

Be aware of drivers from other neighborhoods driving through your neighborhood. These drivers may slow down to look for addresses, make erratic turning maneuvers, etc.

The following California Vehicle Code sections apply to residential areas:

Section 21750 requires the driver of a vehicle overtaking another vehicle or a bicycle proceeding in the same direction to pass on the left at a safe distance without interfering with the safe operation of the overtaken vehicle or bicycle. Use caution because drivers may make turns without signaling.

Section 22103 indicates that no person in a residential district shall make a U-turn when another vehicle is approaching from either direction within 200 feet, except at an intersection when the approaching vehicle is controlled by an official

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