

# Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

March 2012

## Hardening the Target

### Avoid a tax refund scam

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is warning all taxpayers to be aware of an emerging scheme tempting them to file tax returns claiming fraudulent refunds.

The scheme carries a common theme of promising refunds to people who have little or no income and normally don't have a tax filing requirement. As part of the scheme, promoters claim they can obtain a tax refund or nonexistent stimulus payment for the victim, based on the American Opportunity Tax Credit, even if the victim was not enrolled in or paying for college.

In recent weeks, the IRS has identified and stopped an upsurge of these bogus refund claims coming in from across the United States. The IRS is actively investigating the sources of the scheme, and its promoters may be subject to criminal prosecution.

"This is a disgraceful effort by scam artists to take advantage of people by giving them false hopes of a nonexistent refund," said IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman. "We want to warn innocent taxpayers about this new scheme before more people get trapped."

Typically, con artists falsely claim that refunds are available even if the victim went to school decades ago. In many cases, scammers offer bogus promises of free money to seniors, people with very low incomes and members of church congregations.

The IRS has also seen a varia-

tion of this scheme that incorrectly claims the college credit is available to compensate people for paying taxes on groceries.

The IRS has already detected and stopped thousands of these fraudulent claims. However, the scheme can still be quite costly for victims. Promoters may charge exorbitant upfront fees to file these claims and are often long gone when victims discover they've been scammed.

The IRS is reminding people to be careful because all taxpayers, including those who use paid tax preparers, are legally responsible for the accuracy of their returns, and

*Continued on the other side*

### Neighborhood Watch Town Hall Meeting is April 11

Cerritos residents and community members are invited to attend the next Neighborhood Watch Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, April 11 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 [safercerritos.com](http://safercerritos.com).

### Be active in Neighborhood Watch

Help the Cerritos Sheriff's Station and your neighbors by being vigilant in your neighborhood. As a resident, you know who belongs in your neighborhood and who doesn't. Use that knowledge and watch the activities of pedestrians and vehicles that appear out of place. Observant people can alert Sheriff's deputies to criminal behavior. Don't be afraid to call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044 if something or someone seems out of place.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center encourages you to act upon your instincts. If any of the following events occur in your neighborhood, report the situation to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station:

- An unknown person lingering in your neighbor's driveway;
- A car parked in front of your neighbor's house with the engine running for several minutes; or
- A solicitor who may not have a Cerritos business license and could be searching for victims to burglarize.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station strongly focuses on preventing residential burglaries, but cannot do it alone. The "eyes and ears" of the community (residents) and law enforcement have a partnership to help make our neighborhoods safer. Call 911 to report a crime in progress or call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044 to report suspicious activity.

# Monthly Crime Summary: February 2012

---

Cerritos Sheriff's Station personnel investigated 96 Part I felony crimes in February, up by one crime over January. Increases were noted in robberies, residential burglaries and vehicle burglaries, while vehicle thefts declined. At the end of February, field deputies were handling a 2012 weekly average of 255 calls for service.

## Robberies

Seven robberies were investigated in February, up from four in January.

A vehicle was taken by force on Friday, February 3 at 9:46 a.m. in the 19000 block of Elton Circle, but all the parties are known to one another.

A bicycle was the target of a robbery attempt on Sunday, February 5 at 8:50 p.m. Four juveniles pushed the rider down and tried to take the bike near Alondra Boulevard and Bloomfield Avenue but fled without it.

On Wednesday, February 8, a man was standing in the 13400 block of Village Drive at 4:24 a.m. when he was confronted by a passenger in a vehicle. The passenger produced a handgun and robbed the

victim of his cash.

On Thursday, February 9 at 11:55 p.m. a lone gunman entered a store in the 13300 block of South Street and forced employees to relinquish cash from various registers.

On Thursday, February 16 at 4:30 p.m. a male shoplifting suspect struggled with store employees in the 17200 block of Norwalk Boulevard, but was eventually detained for the arriving deputies.

At 10:30 p.m. that same night a male pedestrian was confronted by three suspects in the 17100 block of Pires Avenue and had his iPhone and jacket taken.

The final robbery of the month occurred on Sunday, February 26 at 8:15 p.m. in the Towne Center. A female victim was walking in a lot when a male passenger in a vehicle leaned out and grabbed her purse.

## Residential Burglaries

Residential burglaries increased from 20 in January to 21 in February. Open/unlocked doors or windows were the entry points in 15 of the February crimes. In addition, three windows were pried open, two windows were shattered and a door

was kicked in. Property reported missing included golf clubs, laptop computers, iPads, jewelry, handguns, bicycles and a TV. The new 2012 weekly average in residential burglaries is 5.

## Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries rose from 22 in January to 26 in February. Twenty of the vehicle burglaries in February occurred in high-volume commercial parking lots. Nineteen of the burglarized vehicles were SUVs and stereo items were removed from four vehicles. Victims also reported the loss of prescription medication, credit cards, cell phones, briefcases, sunglasses, laptop computers, clothes, a drum set and cash. The new 2012 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is 5.7.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts dropped from 22 in January to 15 in February. High-volume commercial parking lots were the crime scenes in 12 of the February crimes. Six SUVs, four Hondas, a Toyota and commercial trucks were stolen. The new 2012 weekly average in vehicle thefts is 4.8.

## Avoid a tax refund scam

*Continued from the other side*

must repay any refunds received in error.

To get the facts on tax benefits related to education, visit the Tax Benefits for Education Information Center on the IRS website, [irs.gov](http://irs.gov).

To avoid becoming ensnared in this scheme, the IRS says taxpayers should beware of any of the following:

- Fictitious claims for refunds or rebates based on false statements of entitlement to tax credits.
- Unfamiliar for-profit tax services selling refund and credit

schemes to church congregations.

- Internet solicitations that direct individuals to toll-free numbers and then solicit Social Security numbers.
- Homemade flyers and brochures implying credits or refunds are available without proof of eligibility.
- Offers of free money with no documentation required.
- Promises of refunds for "Low Income – No Documents Tax Returns."
- Claims for the expired Economic

Recovery Credit Program or for economic stimulus payments.

- Unsolicited offers to prepare a return and split the refund.
- Unfamiliar return preparation firms soliciting business from cities outside of the normal business or commuting area.

This refund scheme features many of the warning signs the IRS cautions taxpayers to watch for when choosing a tax preparer. For advice on choosing a competent tax professional, see the Tips for Choosing a Tax Return Preparer section on the IRS website, [irs.gov](http://irs.gov).

---

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.