

# Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

August 2013

## Hardening the Target

### Drive safely to prevent accidents

Vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death in people ages 15 to 20. Twenty percent of fatal car accidents are caused by teenage drivers. According to the National Safety Council, the following things can contribute to accidents:

- Distractions
- Speed
- Misjudging stopping and merging distances
- Vehicle performance
- Road conditions

Drivers of any age can suffer distractions behind the wheel. Southern California is inundated with vehicles, and motorists often attempt to perform multiple tasks while driving, placing themselves and others on the road in great danger.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center would like to remind you that driving requires your undivided attention. This applies to driving under any conditions, although the likelihood of an accident increases with inclement weather, darkness and higher speeds.

Cell phone use is among the major factors that lead to distracted motorists. Three of five drivers use cell phones or other devices to talk or text while driving. Doing either one is against the law unless you are using a hands-free device. Drivers often hold the phone in one hand, obstructing their vision on that side of the vehicle. With only one hand

free, using turn signals is frequently neglected. Drivers also sometimes gesture with their free hand while in conversation, completely removing any control of the steering wheel.

Cars have been known to drift into adjacent lanes when the drivers are on phone calls. Many drivers become so involved in their conversations that they lose awareness of the flow of traffic and reduce their speed. This is very common on the freeway and often leads to road rage incidents.

Although the first cell phone violation may only cost you \$20 and each subsequent violation \$50, these figures are just base fines. In California, there are additional fees attached to the base fine that are called penalty assessments. These additional assessments are used for court construction, maintenance of a DNA database, state and county penalty funds and emergency medical services funds. With penalty assessments, a \$20 citation can end up costing nearly \$162, and a \$50 citation \$285.

Other things that distract drivers are eating food, other passengers or pets in the vehicle, changing CDs or adjusting the radio, other vehicles on the roadway, reading while driving and scenery. Keep in mind that driving on our congested streets and highways requires your undivided attention at all times.

### Be aware of residential burglars

Cerritos Sheriff's deputies often times have investigated residential burglaries where a resident was inside while an intruder attempted to enter the home. A common series of events are known to precede many residential burglaries, most centering on a criminal trying to ascertain if anyone is at home.

The easiest way for a criminal to determine this is to simply knock on the front door. Burglars are known to continue knocking until they feel comfortable that the home is unoccupied. At that point, the suspect(s) usually walk along the side of the home and enter the backyard through a gate. Once concealed, they can check for windows that are open or unlocked, or force a window or sliding glass door open.

If an occupant opens the front door, it is common for the suspect to ask for someone by name or to pose as a solicitor. The suspect will then leave the area or locate another target in the neighborhood. If the occupant chooses not to answer the door, the would-be burglar may opt to enter the backyard after assuming that no one is home.

If you do open the door and are asked about a non-existent person or confronted with a "solicitor" who is not wearing a uniform or some form of identification, contact the Cerritos Sheriff's Station immediately. Be

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# Monthly Crime Summary: July 2013

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There were 87 Part I felony crime investigations conducted by members of the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in July, down from 95 in June. Vehicle thefts increased in July and robberies, residential burglaries and vehicle burglaries decreased. At the end of July, field deputies had responded to a 2013 weekly average of 302 calls for service.

## Robberies

Three robberies were investigated by Cerritos deputies in July, compared to four incidents in June.

On Tuesday, July 16 at 4:45 p.m., a lone male suspect entered a bank

in the 11300 block of South Street and presented a demand note that announced a robbery. The teller relinquished cash, although no weapon was seen. The suspect was arrested after a brief investigation revealed his identity.

On Friday, July 19 at 4:30 p.m., a male suspect approached a female victim in a lot on 183rd Street near the 605 Freeway. As she attempted to enter her vehicle, the suspect told her that he was committing a robbery and demanded her cell phone. He fled without any property, apparently scared off when a vehicle started to park next to them.

On Thursday, July 25 at 1:25 p.m., a shoplifting incident at a store in the Cerritos Towne Center elevated into a robbery when a male suspect punched two loss prevention employees while attempting to flee with merchandise. The suspect fled, but left the merchandise. Detectives identified him and arrested him within three days of the crime.

## Residential Burglaries

Residential burglaries decreased from 17 in June to 11 in July. Six of the recent cases were made possible by open/unlocked doors or windows. Three windows were shattered and two were pried open. Laptop computers, iPads, televisions, jewelry, bicycles, cash and purses were among the items reported stolen. The weekly average in residential burglaries for 2013 was 4.6 at the end of July.

## Vehicle Burglaries

There were 15 vehicle burglaries recorded in July compared to 19 in June. Nine of the July crimes occurred in high-volume commercial parking lots. Nine involved SUVs. Car stereo items were taken in two cases and a GPS unit in another. Other property reported stolen included a guitar, laptop computers, hair clippers, sunglasses, CDs, cell phones, clothes, shoes and third-row seats from SUVs. The new 2013 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is 6.8.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts increased during this reporting period, with 14 reported in June and 15 logged in July. Twenty-two of the most recent incidents occurred in high-volume commercial parking lots. Ten of the vehicles stolen were SUVs and nine were Honda products. A commercial truck, a motorcycle and a golf cart were also among those vehicles reported stolen. The 2013 weekly average in vehicle thefts is now 4.1.

## Be aware of residential burglars

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prepared to offer a physical description of the person along with any vehicle he or she may have entered and their direction of travel. If you do not want to answer the door, tell the individual from behind the closed door that you cannot speak at the moment, or make some type of noise that will indicate that the home is occupied. This could include turning up the volume on a radio or television, slamming a door or making any other sound that will clearly be heard on the front porch.

Watch where the person goes after leaving your home, and if it is to the side of your house, call 911 immediately. Yelling may now be in order to alert the suspect to your presence. If the individual does not flee, exit the home and go to a neighbor's house while you wait for the responding deputies.

This information is important to share with other family members who may be home alone during the day, which is typically when these activities are most likely to occur. Most residential burglaries are com-

mitted while residents are at work or at school.

Timely communication with the Cerritos Sheriff's Station is vital in apprehending criminals. Residents have the ability to provide useful information to responding deputies and dramatically increase the chance that the suspect(s) will be arrested.

## Follow back-to-school safety tips

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center encourages drivers to follow these simple suggestions to help make our school zones safer:

- Don't speed
- Don't impede traffic by dropping children off in the middle of the street
- Don't double park
- Don't block intersections or driveways
- Don't make U-turns
- Always make sure that your children are wearing seat belts when inside a vehicle

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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.