

# Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

October 2013

Hardening the  Target

## Better Business Bureau warns against Affordable Care Act scammers

Consumers across the country are reporting receiving phone calls about new health insurance cards required by the Affordable Care Act from people claiming to be from the government. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is warning consumers that this is a scam that began surfacing as the October implementation date for the Health Insurance Marketplace approached.

The scam involves consumers receiving a call from someone claiming to be from the federal government. The caller informs the receiver that they have been selected as part of the initial group of Americans to receive insurance cards through the new Affordable Care Act. However, before the caller can mail the card, the receiver needs to verify personal information such as bank account and Social Security numbers.

The BBB urges consumers to ignore these pitches and make note of the following precautions:

**Be cautious with your identity.** Never give personal information to someone who has contacted you unsolicited, whether by phone, email, social media or in person.

**Hang up, don't press any buttons and don't call back.** Returning the phone call may give the con artist information he can use.

**The government uses regular mail.** Government agencies normally communicate through the mail, so be cautious of calls, text messages or emails.

**Don't trust caller ID.** Scammers have technology that lets them display any number or organization name on your screen.

**Keep your personal information to yourself.** Never give out personal information such as credit card numbers, bank account numbers, date of birth or Social Security numbers to unfamiliar callers.

"Con artists are taking advantage

of people's confusion about what exactly the Affordable Care Act means for them," remarked Carrie A. Hurt, president and CEO of the Council of Better Business Bureaus. "Scammers' favorite tools are confusion and fear.

"This is the latest twist on the 'Medicare scam' that BBB has seen for years," she continued. "Whenever there is a new government program or new public policy, fraudsters will take advantage of people. But the simple fact is there is no Affordable Care card. It's a scam."

The BBB has issued several Scam Alerts warning consumers about scams related to Obamacare.

For more information on the Affordable Care Act and the Health Insurance Marketplace, visit [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov). For tips you can trust, go to [bbb.org](http://bbb.org). To report a scam or sign up for BBB Scam Alerts, log onto [bbb.org/scam](http://bbb.org/scam).

## Beware the grandparent phone scam

The development and use of the Internet has made it easier for fraudsters and scam artists to operate, although old-fashioned phone scams never seem to completely go away.

One such scam, the grandparent phone scam, seems to have resurfaced in Cerritos and around the region. According to a "CNNMoney" article, as many as 40,000 incidents

of scammers calling on the telephone impersonating a family member in need of money were reported in 2010.

These crimes often involve someone claiming to be a relative, usually a grandchild, who is in some kind of crisis. The distress call often involves an arrest or lost passport in a foreign country, a traffic accident

in some distant United States city or some type of medical emergency in a far-away locale.

KABC-TV recently relayed the story of an 80-year old woman who lost \$25,000 in one of these schemes when she was called by someone she thought was one of her 14 grandchildren. He had been arrested

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# Monthly Crime Summary: September 2013

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Part I felony crime investigations dropped to 79 cases in September, compared to 98 in August. Robberies, residential burglaries, vehicle burglaries and vehicle thefts all declined. At the end of September, patrol deputies had responded to a 2013 weekly average of 300 calls for service.

## Robberies

Two robberies were reported in September, compared to six incidents in August.

On Wednesday, September 25 at 7:32 p.m., a male suspect opened the door of a parked vehicle in the 10800 block of Alondra Boulevard and confronted the driver. The victim relinquished a small amount of cash and the suspect fled.

At 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 26, a male victim noticed two suspects stealing items from his

work truck that was parked in the 18000 block of Kensington Avenue. When the victim attempted to stop them, he was pepper-sprayed and the suspects drove away in a white vehicle.

## Residential Burglaries

Eight residential burglaries were recorded in September. There were 11 logged in both July and August. Six of the September crimes were attributed to open/unlocked doors or windows. Two windows were shattered. Watches, iPads, cameras, cash, jewelry, laptop computers and a television were reported taken. At the end of September, the 2013 weekly average in residential burglaries was 4.2.

## Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries dropped from 23 in August to 21 in September. High-volume commercial parking

lots were the crime scenes in 16 of the September incidents. Sixteen of the cases involved SUVs. Stereo components, GPS units, cell phones, clothes, tools, credit cards, purses, wallets, laptop computers, sunglasses, golf clubs and third-row seats from SUVs were among the items stolen. The new 2013 weekly average in vehicle burglaries is 6.4.

## Vehicle Thefts

Vehicle thefts also decreased in September to 21, after 26 cases were reported in August. High-volume commercial parking lots were involved in 17 of the September thefts. Three of the month's thefts included SUVs and 10 were Honda products. Commercial trucks and trailers were among the vehicles listed as stolen. The 2013 weekly average in vehicle thefts is now 4.4.

## Beware the grandparent phone scam

*Continued from the other side* in Las Vegas and needed money to get out of jail. She never hesitated to wire the money and the thief never hesitated to take it and run.

The senior population is especially vulnerable to fraud and scam artists, as thieves believe seniors are unlikely to be technically savvy, but are likely to have large bank accounts. While the banking industry has gotten better at spotting suspicious account activity involving their senior customers, many scams involve smaller sums of money that would not be noticed by a bank.

Law enforcement is also adept

at investigating crimes perpetrated against seniors, but again, usually when large amounts of money are involved. Seniors who lose a few thousand dollars to a scam artist rarely recover their money.

Be suspicious of anyone you don't know who asks you for money on the telephone, on the Internet or even walking through a grocery store parking lot. Always contact other family members or friends before wiring money. If contacted by someone claiming to be a family member, ask questions that only that person could answer correctly. With so much personal information being posted on social networking sites, also consider using a secret identification code that is only known by family members.

For more information about fraud crime, visit the City of Cerritos safety website at [safercerritos.com](http://safercerritos.com).

## Be cautious of coyotes in Cerritos

Wild animals, including coyotes, occasionally wander into residential and commercial areas of Cerritos. To avoid an encounter with a coyote:

- Eliminate potential food and water sources.
- Keep areas free of thick brush and weeds.
- Enclose the bottoms of porches and decks.
- Keep dogs on a leash at all times when outdoors.
- Keep small animals inside unless they are supervised.

Individuals who observe a coyote should attempt to frighten it away by shouting or otherwise acting aggressively in order to reinforce the coyote's fear of people.

To report a coyote sighting, call Long Beach Animal Care Services at (562) 570-7387.

Scan this code to view the City of Cerritos' safety website, [safercerritos.com](http://safercerritos.com).



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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.