

Cerritos Neighborhood Watch Report

January 2014

Hardening the Target

Putting burglars out of business

The practice of knocking at the front door of a residence to determine if anyone is at home is a long-standing practice of professional burglars. If no one answers they know the home is vulnerable to attack. If someone answers the burglar pretends to be looking for someone and gives a made-up name. This form of reconnaissance or “casing” is believed to be a common tactic of burglars who prey upon Cerritos neighborhoods. And while no statistics can be gathered to determine how often potential burglars use this technique, it did occur as recently as January 2 of this year.

At about 11 a.m. a resident on Morningrain Avenue heard someone knock at her front door. Not recognizing the individual, she didn't answer or say anything. Unfortunately, the burglar took this as a signal that the house was unoccupied and a short time later the suspect was heard breaking into the side garage door. The resident's quick 911 call and immediate response by Sheriff's deputies resulted in two young men from Los Angeles going to jail.

It seems to be quite common for our residents to decline to answer

their front doors when the individual is unknown or might be a solicitor. Since burglars are by nature sneaky and non-confrontational, when no one answers a door knock in a quiet neighborhood it increases the likelihood that a burglary will occur. In this scenario it is common for the burglar to enter the rear yard of the residence through a side gate, find an open window or pry or break a window or sliding door, and enter the home. Cash, jewelry and small electronics are soon long gone, along with the burglar who is rarely apprehended or the property recovered.

The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center staff recommends that if you do not want to answer your front door you somehow let the person know that the home is occupied. Make some noise that you know can be heard at your front door, such as playing loud music, turning up your TV, slamming an interior door, or even hitting two pans together. There is also nothing wrong with approaching the front door from the inside and announcing that this is not a good time for you and that you are not interested. Any of these methods

tells potential thieves that the home is occupied and NOT a good target for a residential burglary.

Be sure to watch the activity of the person so you will know if he or she walks around to the side of the home and attempts to open a gate or enters the rear yard. If the person does enter a rear yard, call 911 immediately and be prepared to provide a description of the suspect when talking to Sheriff's desk personnel. If the person leaves the area on foot, note the direction of travel. If the suspect leaves in a vehicle it is important to relay a description to the Sheriff's personnel.

During 2013 our Sheriff's deputies have focused a great deal of effort on strategies to reduce the residential burglary rate, but catching burglars depends upon a partnership between law enforcement and alert residents. Don't hesitate to call the Sheriff's dispatch center at (562) 860-0044 when a person is going door-to-door. This might be someone casing your neighborhood. Remember, if you see something, say something, and help put potential burglars out of business.

Follow the two-second intersection rule

There are many “blind intersections” in Cerritos. Telephone poles, trees, and block walls surrounding residential housing tracts are among the causes. It is important to check and double-check traffic coming at you from all directions when entering a major arterial street. Also remem-

ber that when you are stopped at a red light and the light changes green, make the “two-second” pause before proceeding. As we all know, there are those that see an amber light as a reason to accelerate. Oftentimes the light will turn red while they are approaching the limit line. Those preparing to

drive on the green light are in a dangerous position. The Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center staff urges you to take a couple of seconds to look both ways before proceeding. Those couple of seconds could be the difference between life and death, or serious but avoidable injuries.

Monthly Crime Summary: December 2013

Cerritos Sheriff's Station personnel investigated 77 Part I felony crimes in December which is a significant reduction from the 92 investigations conducted in November. Robberies increased from two in October to 10 in December, which is more in line with the weekly average this past year of about six robberies each week. Although the final year-end figures have not yet been analyzed, the weekly averages for every Part I crime category declined in 2013 versus 2012, except for auto thefts and shoplifting.

Robberies

Five of the December robberies involved victims being accosted while walking down a street. Three robberies occurred in commercial businesses, and two were actually shoplifts that escalated into robberies when loss prevention officers attempted to detain the suspect.

The street robberies had somewhat similar M/Os in that all five incidents involved victims walking down the street when they were accosted by suspects on foot or, in one robbery, on a bicycle. The suspects demanded money, cell phones and a purse, but fortunately none of the suspects were armed with weapons except for one female suspect who used pepper spray when stealing the victim's purse. Four of the robberies occurred after dark, from 7:30 p.m. to about 10 p.m., and one robbery took place at 4:30 p.m. in the afternoon. It is important to note that all of our victims were walking alone, which is usually the case with street robberies in Cerritos. Rarely does anyone report a street robbery with two or more victims, so when taking a walk at night it is suggested to walk in pairs whenever possible.

Aggravated Assaults

Reported felony assaults increased from one in November to four last month. One involved a fight between a boyfriend and girlfriend outside of Los Cerritos Center. The victim was choked but did not sustain any serious injuries. Another fight outside of the

Cerritos bowling alley on Carmenita Road resulted in a broken jaw. The suspect has been identified and detectives are tracking him down. Another assault occurred on Destino Place where the resident's "friend" fired numerous rounds from a pellet gun at the victim and his garage door (the friend is in custody). A suspected shoplifter at the Ralphs on South Street used pepper spray to accost a store employee who had tried to question her in the parking lot about a possible theft (the suspect is at large). And finally, an intoxicated individual fired off multiple rounds in the outside loading area at the back of the Home Depot on Alondra Boulevard. Store employees observed him walking onto the Cerritos College campus where campus police officers arrested him. The suspect was found with the handgun in his possession, but he denied shooting it. His motive for the shooting is unclear, so the detectives and the courts will have to sort this one out.

Residential Burglaries

There were 11 residential burglaries reported in December, which is a significant decline from the 25 reported in November. Most residential burglaries in Cerritos take place on weekdays, but in December four burglaries occurred on weekends. And as is usually the case, most occurred during the day and many were in the late afternoon. Jewelry and laptop computers were the common target, and side and rear windows were the usual point of entry. Two burglaries had points of entry through garage doors. One garage door was kicked in and one was opened by burglars after they broke into a vehicle in the driveway and used the car's garage door opener.

Commercial/Other Structure Burglaries

Eight other burglaries reported in December did not involve personal residences, which is the same number as in November. Five of these burglaries involved various types of businesses, including vacant warehouses. The Target store on South Street was

hit by burglars on December 1 and 25. In the first burglary, a door was pried open and in the second a front window shattered. The property stolen in both cases was Xbox video game systems.

Vehicle Burglaries

Continuing with the decline in Part I crimes last month, there were 14 vehicle burglaries in December, down from 25 in November. Ten of the reported vehicle burglaries occurred in commercial or public parking lots. Despite the huge volume of vehicles at the Los Cerritos Center, there were only two vehicle burglaries reported at that location in December. Two others occurred during a sporting event at Gahr High School. In most of these burglaries a vehicle window was shattered, although a couple of door locks were punched as well. Stolen items included the usual property that shouldn't be left in vehicles, such as wallets, purses, \$400 in cash, checks, a laptop, a video game, an iPod and a stethoscope (plus tools and clothing).

Vehicle Thefts

There were 17 vehicle thefts in December, which is the same number as reported in November. Half of the reported stolen vehicles were from the Los Cerritos Center, and four were stolen in or near the Cerritos Towne Center. This trend in our two large commercial centers is due to the huge volume of vehicles at these locations during the Christmas shopping season. Seven of the stolen vehicles were older model Hondas or Toyotas, which has been the usual trend in the make and age of stolen vehicles in Cerritos.

Grand Thefts

There were 13 reported felony thefts during December involving a variety of stolen items. A bicycle was stolen from a bike rack in a commercial center on Alondra Boulevard and the local cable company lost seven amplifier boxes from three residential parkways around the City. Other businesses reported the theft of various items, including a laptop, plumbing tools, about \$2,500 in cash, a cell phone and even a lady's ring.

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.