

Safety and the holidays

Regular readers of the “Cerritos Neighborhood Watch” newsletter are well versed on various tips and strategies for keeping themselves and their property safe. However, the busy holiday season brings additional challenges to our personal safety and security. The oftentimes overwhelming multitude of activities can result in people being hurried and careless, not paying attention to their surroundings or their property and increasing their crime risk. As police departments around the country remind us, at this time of year we can never be “too careful, too prepared or too aware.”

With two large regional shopping facilities in our City, there will be thousands of people flocking to Cerritos to shop and dine during the next few weeks. Unfortunately, there may be some people who come here with ill intent. Keeping safe while shopping is fairly simple if a few precautions are followed. We encourage you to review and practice the following holiday safety tips.

- Shop only during daylight hours if possible.
- Travel in pairs when shopping at night.

- When shopping, remember where you parked your car.
- Always park in a well-lighted and well-traveled area, and not in a remote dark area.
- Keep car doors locked at all times when driving and while parked in a parking lot.
- Avoid parking next to vans and campers.
- Never leave packages visible in a car. Instead, lock them in the trunk.
- Locate keys and have them ready before arriving at your car.
- Keep a secure hold on your purse and place it inside of your vehicle before unloading items.
- Do not approach your car if suspicious persons are nearby.
- Request an escort from mall security if you have any safety concerns.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Use ATMs in lighted areas.
- Use ATMs inside a police station or mall if possible.
- Stay aware of who and what is around you.
- Don't resist if someone tries to take your

belongings, and don't chase the suspect. Call 9-1-1.

- Carry only the credit cards you need and avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Keep a record at home of credit card numbers and phone numbers to call in the event that they are stolen or lost.
- Beware of anyone who approaches you in a parking lot with a “good deal.”
- Drive defensively; traffic is heavier during the holidays and distracted drivers abound.
- When shopping with children, discuss a plan of where to meet should you get separated.
- Teach your children to ask a store clerk for help if necessary.
- Never leave children alone in your car while shopping.

The staff at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/Community Safety Center wishes you a safe, happy and peaceful holiday season. And remember, ***If You See Something, Say Something*** by calling the Sheriff's dispatch center at (562) 860-0044.

Monthly Crime Summary: October 2014

There were 79 Part I felony crimes reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in October, a 23 percent reduction from the 102 reported in September. Also good news is the small number of violent crimes that occur in Cerritos. Last month five robberies were reported, with two involving juveniles. Sixteen residential burglaries were reported, a decrease from the 33 reported in September. The following is a summary of the reported crimes by category: five robberies; one aggravated assault; 16 residential burglaries; 11 commercial/other burglaries; 16 grand thefts; 11 vehicle burglaries; and 19 auto thefts.

Sellers Beware

Telephone scams (usually involving the purchase of Green Dot Money-Paks) are occurring in epidemic proportions throughout the country and happening in Cerritos on a

regular basis. Older residents are especially vulnerable to scammers calling and threatening immediate arrest if an outstanding tax bill or old citation isn't immediately paid. We also have another recurring crime in Cerritos that, like telephone scams, can only be averted if potential victims are informed of the problem and take preventive action. This recurring crime is robbery, sometimes strong-arm and sometimes involving a weapon, and is committed by thieves who respond to online ads, usually on Craigslist. The suspects pretend to be interested in the item for sale, usually a cell phone or laptop computer, lure their victims to a location and then rob the victim. This occurred this past month outside of the Starbucks located at South Street and Gridley Road. The female victim had advertised a new iPhone on Craigslist, was contacted by a potential customer and agreed on a time

and location to meet. Both parties met, the merchandise was inspected and then the suspect threatened the victim by claiming to have a gun. The suspect then made off with the expensive phone. The lesson here is clear: people who sell online should be very careful where they conduct the transaction. As this case shows, you may be vulnerable even in busy public spaces. Consider meeting prospective customers at the Cerritos Sheriff's Station parking lot, perhaps even coming into the station lobby. The occasional Craigslist transaction is acceptable, especially if it helps a Cerritos resident avoid becoming a crime victim.

Robberies

There were five robberies reported in October, the same number as in September and August.

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MONTHLY CRIME SUMMARY: October 2014

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Violent crime figures continue to be low in Cerritos. The first robbery reported last month occurred in the Cerritos Civic Center and involved two teenagers, one of whom threatened the other with bodily injury if money wasn't handed over. The second reported robbery involved an older gentleman who was robbed of \$2 when approached by two men as he walked down Norwalk Boulevard at 3 a.m. The third robbery involved the Craigslist caper mentioned previously. The victim went online to sell an expensive iPhone 6 plus and ended up becoming a robbery victim. (Have someone with you when you sell expensive items to people you don't know, and consider conducting business inside of the Cerritos Sheriff's Station, or at least in the parking lot.) Another robbery occurred in the parking lot outside of Seafood City on Norwalk Boulevard. While loading items into her vehicle, a woman was approached by two suspects who removed two purses from her shoulder. The loss was approximately \$5,000. The final robbery involved a couple of teenagers, one of whom pushed the other off of his skateboard and fled with it.

Aggravated Assaults

The lone felony assault reported last month involved two friends fighting in the food court at Los Cerritos Center. It is undetermined what prompted the dispute, but one woman kicked and hit the other, causing enough injury to warrant a felony charge.

Residential Burglaries

The 16 residential burglaries reported last month was a significant reduction compared to the 33 reported in September. No particular area of the City was targeted, although it should be noted that the southwest corner of Cerritos, south of South Street and west of Norwalk Boulevard, had no burglaries reported and only a couple of other crimes the entire month. One trend of note is the increase in the number of front doors being kicked in. Eight of the reported burglaries involved suspects kicking in front doors to gain entry into a residence. Rear sliding doors or windows were the points of entry in many of the

other burglaries. As is common in most burglaries reported in Cerritos, the suspect or suspects ransacked bedrooms and stole jewelry, computers, cameras and cash. In one incident the suspect stole car keys from inside of the home and drove off in a Honda that was parked in the garage. One home being fumigated and covered in a tent on Bermuda Street was targeted and a safe was stolen. Arrests were made in two of the cases.

Commercial/Other Structure Burglaries

There were 16 commercial/other structure burglaries in October, one more than was reported in September. The targeted locations ran the gamut from a locker at Cerritos High School where a lock was cut and two cell phones stolen, to a storage room where suspects cut a hole in a wall and stole \$10,000 in electronics from Toys "R" Us. During overnight hours two businesses — a restaurant on Bloomfield Avenue and a wireless communications store on Artesia Boulevard — had a glass door and a window shattered and cash and merchandise stolen. One thief targeted a storage locker at the self-storage facility on Valley View Avenue. A storage building in the rear of a business, also on Valley View Avenue, had a lock cut and items stolen. Thieves also targeted copper pipe in a bathroom at Regional Park and at a vacant warehouse on Valley View Avenue. A suspect was arrested as he was leaving the vacant warehouse.

Grand Thefts

Grand theft reports totaled 19 last month, although two occurred in previous months and were just reported. Similar to the Craigslist robbery mentioned above, another iPhone seller at the Starbucks on South Street and Gridley Road had the transaction go awry when the buyer grabbed the merchandise and fled to a waiting car. A housekeeper is suspected of stealing a ring from an 84-year-old resident, two elephant statues were stolen from a front yard on Sunny Ridge Court and caretakers are suspected of stealing \$12,000 in jewelry from a home on Nicholas Avenue. A suspect was arrested for stealing jewelry from the Kohl's in the Cerritos Towne Center, catalytic converters were cut off of

a Toyota truck in a parking lot on 183rd Street and a delivery truck parked on Artesia Boulevard and a camera valued at \$6,000 was stolen from an unlocked vehicle parked on Canyon Creek Road.

Another elderly resident was the victim of the IRS scam. After receiving a telephone call and being threatened with immediate arrest, the female victim purchased Money Pak cards, called the "IRS" back and immediately lost a little over \$2,000. Remember, no government agency will call and demand that you purchase a money card to resolve a problem.

Vehicle Burglaries

There were 11 vehicle burglaries reported in October, a decrease from 20 in September. Three burglaries occurred in residential neighborhoods, resulting in the loss of a purse and credit cards, a backpack, a camera, an iPad and a laptop computer. Two cars were targeted at Los Cerritos Center, with nothing being taken in one case and a backpack and textbooks in the other. There were also two vehicle burglary reports last month at the Cerritos Towne Center, one involving the theft of a laptop computer and one the theft of a third-row seat from a Chevy Suburban. The Home Depot center on Alondra Boulevard was targeted by thieves once, which is a reduction from six reports in September.

Vehicle Thefts

Nineteen vehicles were reported stolen in Cerritos in October, the same number as the previous month. Thirteen of the 19 cases occurred in commercial parking lots, including four near the Target on South Street, four at Los Cerritos Center, two at the Cerritos Towne Center and one at the Best Plaza center on 183rd Street. Thirteen of the 19 cars stolen were Hondas, primarily 1990-era Accords. Twelve out of the 19 vehicles were recovered as of early November (eight of the Hondas were recovered). Norwalk and Long Beach are apparently common destinations for car thieves as six of the recovered vehicles were located in those cities.

(562) 916-1266
Cerritos Community Safety Division

(562) 860-0044
Cerritos Sheriff's Station

CERRITOS SHERIFF'S STATION
COMMUNITY SAFETY CENTER

To join Cerritos Neighborhood Watch,
call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/
Community Safety Center
at (562) 916-1266.