

Drivers urged to follow traffic safety tips as children head back to school

You would never suspect from news media reports that the greatest threat to residents in Los Angeles County, both personally and financially, isn't violent or property crime. If you watch any television news channel at the top of the hour, on most days there will be a breaking news story that will frighten you into not wanting to leave your house.

But the truth is that in Cerritos, and probably in all of the other 88 cities in Los Angeles County, the most significant personal risk to you and your family is while driving your car on local streets and highways. Despite all of the attention given to shootings and robberies around the region — and in Cerritos this past year to residential burglary — the single most common public safety-related incident that befalls Cerritos residents is when cars collide with other cars, bicyclists or pedestrians. Cerritos averages approximately 200 residential burglaries annually, but between 800 to more than 1,000 reported traffic collisions. Living defensively is important in reducing our crime risk, but driving defensively is arguably even more important in reducing our risk of personal injury and even death.

It is with this reality in mind, and because September is back-to-school month, that it is

important to heed school-related traffic safety tips. This month thousands of kids will be going back to the 19 schools in Cerritos, and most will be driven by mom or dad and dropped off as close to the front of the school as possible. We can engage in wishful thinking and complain about the fact that kids don't walk to school like in the old days, or that parents park illegally and let their kids cross streets in an unsafe manner or that the cops should patrol the schools more and issue more citations to irresponsible parents. But if we are parents, grandparents or caregivers responsible for transporting family members to and from school each day, the personal safety of those precious lives is ultimately our responsibility.

Below are some school safety tips provided by the National Safe Routes to School Program and the City of Cerritos Community Safety Division staff.

- Slow down and obey all traffic laws and speed limits. This may be the most important safety tip to observe around schools.
- Comply with school drop-off and pick-up procedures. Many schools in Cerritos have student valet or parking lot transition programs and should be used if possible.

- Avoid double parking and stopping in crosswalks or in people's driveways to let children out of the car. Do not allow children to cross the street mid-block, and teach them to use crosswalks. Cerritos Sheriff's deputies have been directed to issue citations for these violations when observed.
- Stop for a school bus when red overhead lights are flashing or a stop sign has been activated on the street side of the bus. This is a very expensive citation that deputies will issue when such a violation is observed.
- Watch for children crossing streets near schools or at nearby corners. Remember that pedestrians have the right-of-way when in marked or unmarked crosswalks. (Any intersection has an unmarked crosswalk unless a posted sign says otherwise.)
- Watch for children on sidewalks when backing out or entering a driveway.
- Pay attention to the directions of crossing guards, and take the time to thank them once in a while. There are 23 guards in Cerritos who put themselves at risk every day protecting our kids.

These tips are not complicated, but they can save lives. Heed them and let's help keep the children in Cerritos safe this year.

Monthly Crime Summary: August 2014

There were 83 Part I felony crimes reported to the Cerritos Sheriff's Station in August, a significant increase from the 57 reported in July, but almost the same figure as in June (82). The following is a summary of the reported crimes by category: five robberies (two were shoplifts that escalated into robberies); three aggravated assaults; 10 residential burglaries; 12 commercial/other burglaries (three were locker thefts); 11 grand thefts; 21 vehicle burglaries; and 21 auto thefts (three were attempts).

Scams and Mail Theft Alerts

Cerritos residents continued to be victimized by telephone scams in August. On two occasions scammers telephoned residents, identified themselves as an IRS or immigration official

and demanded money in order to resolve a tax or immigration problem. Our victims were directed to purchase money cards and call the "agents" back with the pin numbers. Upon giving the numbers to the scammers they immediately lost thousands of dollars that will never be recovered. Scammers will use endless titles and names of government agencies they claim to represent, but there are two consistent elements in every one of these scams: victims are always directed to purchase a pre-paid money card and then provide the card's pin number by phone to someone they don't know. Please tell your friends and neighbors that government agencies do not telephone people and ask them to run out and buy a money card at the local CVS in order

to resolve any type of problem or issue. These are always scams, plain and simple.

Reports of mail thefts in Cerritos are sporadic, but suspects were seen recently using sticky devices attached to string and attempting to steal mail from corner mailboxes. It is strongly recommended that any mail containing personal or financial information such as bills or checks only be mailed at a U. S. Post Office and only by dropping the mail at the inside slot, not in the parking lot boxes, which have also been targeted by thieves.

Robberies

Two of the five robberies in August were shoplifts gone bad. A male shoplifter was

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MONTHLY CRIME SUMMARY: August 2014

Continued from the other side

arrested outside of Nordstrom after striking a loss prevention officer, and a woman escaped from Walmart with various items after fighting with loss prevention officers. On two separate occasions females were accosted on the street at gunpoint and robbed of their purses (one at approximately 10:30 a.m. and the other at about 10 p.m.). A teenager walking down a street at approximately 9 a.m. was the victim of a strong-arm robbery resulting in the loss of a necklace and a small amount of cash.

Aggravated Assaults

Of the three assaults reported last month, two involved domestic disputes where women were victims of domestic violence. The other felony assault was a fight between two friends (now former friends) where a golf club was the weapon of choice. Fortunately, the injuries in all three cases were minor.

Residential Burglaries

There were 10 residential burglaries reported in August, only one more than in July. The Cerritos burglary suppression team deputies continue to track burglary trends and deploy resources throughout the City in an effort to quickly respond to calls about suspicious activity. In five of the burglaries sliding windows were the points of entry. A side garage door was kicked in on one case and rear sliding doors were left unlocked and entered in a couple of others. Most residences were ransacked, indicating that burglary crews were the culprits and also that it was likely the suspects knocked on the front door before entering the rear yard to make entry. These suspects stand out and are likely to be seen by alert residents, so ***If You See Something, Say Something*** by calling the Cerritos Sheriff's Station at (562) 860-0044.

The following is a list of reported residential burglaries in July:

- 17200 block Betty Place (Aug. 13-20)
- 13200 block Hart Place (Aug. 17)
- 18900 block Vickie Avenue (Aug. 17-18)
- 12900 block Moorshire Drive (Aug. 17-18)
- 17200 block Pires Avenue (Aug. 18)
- 13800 block Elgers Street (Aug. 24)

- 13100 block Caravel Street (Aug. 28)
- 12300 block Rose Street (Aug. 29)
- 17300 block Stowers Avenue (Aug. 29)
- 13100 block Semora Place (Aug. 30)

Commercial/Other Structure Burglaries

Twelve commercial burglaries occurred last month, including three locker burglaries at the same fitness club on Alondra Boulevard. A purse, a wallet and a debit card were the prime targets. It is recommended that when going to a fitness center or park to exercise that you leave all unnecessary valuables at home except for your driver's license. If you must take items with you, lock them in your trunk before you leave your residence or workplace.

Three restaurants were victimized in August, with cash being the common loss. A nursery on Norwalk Boulevard lost some copper wire from a storage container and two iPads were stolen from an office at Valley Christian High School.

Grand Thefts

As with commercial burglaries, grand theft reports remained about the same in August as in July, with 11 reported crimes. Victoria's Secret again lost several thousand dollars worth of merchandise, and a suspect was arrested after absconding from Macy's with numerous purses. A resident reported the theft of two expensive purses from her home, two businesses lost truck batteries, two women made off with carts of merchandise from Walmart, a bike was stolen from the Home Depot center and a resident in the 12400 block of Sunnycreek Lane had two UPS packages stolen from a front porch.

Vehicle Burglaries

Vehicle burglaries increased in August, with 21 reported compared to 16 the prior month. Nine of the thefts occurred in commercial parking lots and three reports indicated the loss of third row seats from SUVs. With the millions of vehicles parking at the Los Cerritos Center, it's remarkable that only one vehicle was targeted in the complex during the entire month.

In residential areas, locks were pried or windows were shattered and cameras, backpacks, checkbooks and a laptop were stolen. While the

risk of having your vehicle broken into is fairly low regardless of where it is parked in Cerritos, you can completely eliminate all risk if you don't leave valuables in your vehicle, hidden or otherwise, that can instead be easily taken with you into your home (or left at home if going to the mall or gym).

Vehicle Thefts

Stolen vehicle reports jumped dramatically in August, from eight in July to 18 plus three attempted thefts in August. While vehicle burglaries were somewhat equally distributed between residential and commercial areas, auto thefts last month occurred almost entirely in commercial parking lots (19 of the 21 reported). Four auto thefts were reported at the Cerritos Towne Center (three near Walmart), two at Los Cerritos Center and one across the street from the mall in the center on 183rd Street. Two of the 21 thefts involved large cargo trailers, but 14 of the 19 vehicles were smaller Japanese vehicles manufactured in the 1990s, and most were Hondas.

Scan the code below to view the City of Cerritos' safety website, safercerritos.com.



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH WORKS

If you see something, say something.

(562) 860-0044



(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.