

Sun Tzu philosophy applies to public safety

Nearly 2,500 years ago, a historically significant Chinese military general, strategist and philosopher known as Sun Tzu instilled the value of planning and preparation by offering the following words of wisdom – “The opportunity to secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands.”

Sun Tzu’s philosophy on self-reliance has many applications, including public safety. Former Cerritos Community and Safety Services Director Dr. Greg Berg championed Sun Tzu’s philosophy of self-reliance for more than 15 years in the monthly articles published in the Cerritos “Neighborhood Watch Report” under the heading of “Hardening the Target.”

Dr. Berg, a retired deputy chief with the Los Angeles Police Department, knew firsthand that many criminals involved in property crimes are never arrested and stolen property is rarely recovered. According to the latest crime statistics posted on the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) webpage, 1,213 reported incidents of larceny theft occurred within the City of Cerritos during 2013. Those incidents resulted in the arrest of 140 suspects (11.5 percent). The LASD area known as South Patrol Division, which is comprised of Carson Station, Norwalk Station, Lakewood Station, Lomita Station, Pico Rivera Station and Cerritos Station, collectively

had an even lower case solve rate. In 2013 there were 10,509 reported incidents of larceny theft within the LASD’s South Patrol Division. Those incidents resulted in the arrest of 962 suspects (9.1 percent). Those statistics are testimony to the fact that the best and most effective strategy to maintain possession of your property is to dissuade would-be lawbreakers by “Hardening the Target.”

The concept of “Hardening the Target” simply refers to strengthening the security of a building or object of attack in order to prevent or minimize damage or loss. In terms of home security, target hardening may be referred to as crime prevention through environmental design. This can include ensuring all doors and windows are closed and securely locked; utilizing alarm systems, motion-activated exterior lights or bells; removing any trees or bushes that could offer suitable hiding places or could be used to climb to a higher level of the property; installing double key dead-bolt locks on exterior doors that are within 24 inches of a glass window; replacing standard door hinge screws with three-inch patio screws; installing a brass surface bolt at the base of the front door to prevent a “kick in;” installing a sliding bar lock on the garage access door; attaching a “beware of dog” sign to your backyard gate; keeping expensive items out of

plain view from the street or walkway; and purchasing a quality metal safe for your valuables. Remember, all small safes must be anchored or the suspects will simply carry them off and force them open somewhere else.

The concept of “Hardening the Target” also applies to automobiles. Last year 211 vehicles were broken into while parked within the City of Cerritos. Many of those thefts could have been avoided by keeping the vehicle’s doors locked or by keeping expensive items such as portable electronics, purses, briefcases, sporting-goods equipment or power tools out of view. Securing items from view before arriving at a location where you intend to park your car is the best practice. Many times would-be car burglars survey the parking lots of popular shopping centers or gyms and watch to see if someone is placing valuable items in the vehicle’s trunk before walking away. Additionally, owners of General Motors brand SUVs equipped with a third-row seat can “harden the target” by using a cable lock to secure the seat frame to the floor mounting bracket in order to prevent theft of this popular item.

Remember Sun Tzu’s words of wisdom: “The opportunity to secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands.”

Monthly Crime Summary: June 2015

The first half of 2015 brings a troubling trend. The crime rate throughout the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s (LASD) jurisdictional area and the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD) jurisdictional area continues to escalate. The overall total Part 1 crime rate for the LASD, County-wide, increased 7 percent year-to-date and the overall total Part 1 crime rate for the LAPD, City-wide, increased 12 percent year-to-date. The LASD reported an overall increase of 4.4 percent in Part 1 violent crimes and the LAPD reported an increase of 20 percent in violent crimes. Part 1 property crimes within the LASD’s and LAPD’s jurisdictions were up 7.5 percent and 10.1 percent respectively.

During the month of June, there were 108 Part 1 felony crimes reported to the Cerritos Sheriff’s Station, a 10.1 percent increase compared to the 97 similar crimes reported in May. Worth noting is the fact that Part 1 violent crime within Cerritos is down 8.1 percent year-to-date. There have been 34 instances of Part 1 violent crimes reported in the City this year compared to 37 similar events reported last year. The primary reason for the elevation in Cerritos’ crime rate continues to be the increased number of reported property crimes. The majority of reported property crimes in the City stem from the Los Cerritos Center shopping district (reporting district 2311). Thefts in that shopping

district (2311) account for nearly 17 percent of all reported property crimes in the City.

Thieves have also ventured beyond the retail shopping districts. Many communities are experiencing an increase in residential burglaries. Residential burglars have become more active throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties. This year alone, 118 Cerritos residents have been the victim of a residential burglary compared to 94 last year (a 25.53 percent increase). As a comparison, the burglary rate has increased in the following LASD station areas that have commonalities with Cerritos: Crescenta Valley – 25.6 percent; Industry (Diamond Bar) – 12.5 percent;

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MONTHLY CRIME SUMMARY: June 2015

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San Dimas – 20.5 percent; Lakewood – 15.8 percent; West Hollywood – 14.8 percent; and Walnut – 6 percent.

The best method for curtailing this upward crime trend is vigilance and involvement. One of the best ways to become involved is to join the City's Neighborhood Watch program. Please refer to safercerritos.com for more information on crime and crime prevention programs.

Robberies

The total number of reported robberies within the City is down 19.3 percent compared to the same period last year. This year there have been a total of 21 robberies reported in the City year-to-date (8 – armed; 13 – strong-arm; and 7 – shoplifting with force). Only three armed robberies and three strong-arm robberies were reported in the City during the month of June. That is a relatively low frequency of events considering Cerritos' affluent population, vibrant businesses and robust shopping districts. In comparison, Lakewood reported 37 year-to-date (YTD) robberies; Norwalk reported 70 YTD robberies; Bellflower reported 69 YTD robberies; and Diamond Bar reported 14 YTD robberies.

One of the armed robberies occurred at a donut shop during the late evening hours. A suspect, wearing a face mask and holding a knife, vaulted the donut shop's countertop only to encounter an even more aggressive shop owner who sprayed the would-be robber with a sink hose. The wet and confused robber turned and ran off into the darkness empty handed. One robber entered a cellular phone business, mid-morning, armed with a handgun and stole a supply of new cellular phones and tablets. The third armed robbery occurred in the morning hours at a liquor store. The suspect entered the liquor store armed with a knife and stole money from the cash register. All three strong-arm robberies were the result of shoplifters using physical force in an effort to evade loss prevention agents employed by the business.

Aggravated Assaults

Aggravated assaults are trending up in areas serviced by the LASD and LAPD, which is a concerning trend. There were 3,563 reported

aggravated assaults in the LASD's jurisdiction year-to-date (an increase of 2.55 percent) and 6,234 reported aggravated assaults in LAPD's area (an increase of 26.1 percent). Fortunately, assaults of any type rarely occur in Cerritos. The only reported aggravated assault in the City this month occurred at a restaurant when a would-be car burglar attempted to run over the car owner during the commission of the crime. The car owner was hit by the suspect's fleeing vehicle, but he was uninjured.

Residential Burglaries

The month of June brought a welcome downward trend in the area of residential burglaries. During the month of June only 10 residential burglaries were reported in the City. That number represents half of what has been reported for each of the previous four months. Although June brought a welcome decline in residential burglaries, the year-to-date total is still 25.53 percent higher than the same time period for last year. An analysis of the crime data reveals that most burglaries occur during daytime hours. No particular day was favored. Burglaries occurred on each day of the week and burglars frequently entered the house by shattering a backyard window. Worthy of note is that no burglaries occurred on Saturday or Sunday. This pattern confirms what we already know: burglars seek to avoid being noticed or observed. Since homes are more likely to be occupied on the weekends and neighbors are more likely to be visible, burglars generally avoid the residential housing tracts during the weekend. This pattern underscores the value of a robust Neighborhood Watch program. Watchful neighbors serve as powerful deterrents. On a positive note, on two separate occasions this month, two different burglary suspects were detained and arrested. Learn how to avoid becoming a victim of a residential burglary by visiting safercerritos.com.

Commercial/Other Structure Burglaries

The rate of commercial and/or other types of burglaries in the City has changed very little when compared to the same time period as last year. During the month of June, there were 10

reported burglaries in this category, which is the same number of events reported last June. Seven of the burglaries occurred at closed businesses. The other three burglaries involved thieves cutting the locks off commercial storage unit doors and stealing items from inside the locker units.

Vehicle Burglaries

Thefts from parked vehicles have increased significantly. This month there were 44 reported vehicle burglaries, compared to nine reported for the same month last year. This year there have been 168 vehicles burglarized, compared to 101 reported vehicle burglaries for the same period last year (a 66.34 percent increase). An analysis of the data reveals that 18 of the 44 vehicle burglaries (40.9 percent) occurred while the vehicles were parked at a residence or on a residential street. Only six vehicles were burglarized during daylight hours and 21 vehicles (47.7 percent) were burglarized on the weekend. Thieves only targeted vehicles that contained items of value left in plain view. The crime of vehicle burglary can be virtually eliminated by keeping items of value out of sight.

Grand Thefts Auto

California has the ill-famed distinction for being the state with the most stolen vehicles. According to FBI statistics, eight of the top 10 worst cities in the country for vehicle theft are in California. That trend is also reflected in Los Angeles County. There have been 5,434 vehicles stolen in the LASD jurisdictional area year-to-date (a 16.68 percent increase) and 7,490 vehicles stolen in LAPD's area year-to-date (a 13.2 percent increase). There were 18 vehicles stolen in Cerritos during the month of June; that number represents a 4.76 percent increase compared the same period last year. Collectively, there have been 88 vehicles stolen in the City year-to-date compared to 84 vehicles stolen during the same period last year. Nine of the stolen vehicles were SUVs or pick-up trucks (50 percent).

Avoid becoming a victim; do not tempt fate or criminals by providing attractive opportunities. Remember, if you see something [suspicious], say something [to law enforcement]. For more crime information and prevention tips, visit safercerritos.com.

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CERRITOS SHERIFF'S STATION
COMMUNITY SAFETY CENTER

To join Cerritos Neighborhood Watch,
call the Cerritos Sheriff's Station/
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