



John J. Neu
Chief of Police

BULLETIN

TORRANCE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CRIME ANALYSIS



3300 Civic Center Drive • Torrance, CA 90503 • TEL: 310.618.5528 • FAX: 310.618.6361 • skramer@torranceCA.gov

DISTRACTION BURGLARIES AND RELATED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

AUGUST 07, 2012

DETAILS: In the last two weeks four West End distraction burglary incidents have been reported to the **TORRANCE POLICE DEPARTMENT**. The information provided herein is intended to inform the community and prevent any additional crimes in our city.

Monday, July 23, 2012 at 3:20 p.m. in the 5200 block of Milne: Suspect posed as a construction worker needing to see the victim's backyard while his associate entered the master bedroom and took cash; victims are 82 and 85 years old **Suspect-1:** Other Male Adult, 30-50 years of age, 5'7"-5'9", 175-190 pounds, slim, dark complexion, facial hair, wearing an orange construction vest and carrying a clipboard **Suspect-2:** Other Male Adult, 20-30 years of age, 5'6"-5'8", stocky, unknown clothing **Suspect-3:** (Driver) Other Male Adult, in his 30s, light beard, "good looking", wearing a dark ball cap, white t-shirt - **both S-1 and S-2 had strong unknown accents** **Suspect vehicle:** gray, newer SUV with **POWER** paper plates

Thursday, August 2, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. in the 5200 block of Bindewald: The 86-year-old victim was doing yard work in her front yard when suspects approached her and inquired if her vehicle that was parked in front of her residence was for sale. The suspects then took turns using the victim's bathroom and searching bedroom drawers, but took nothing **Suspect-1:** "Chris" possibly Hispanic Male Adult, 25-35 years old, 5'8" tall, medium build, dark hair, mustache, wearing a blue and white checkered Pendleton, white t-shirt underneath and blue jeans **Suspect-2:** "Lisa" possibly Hispanic Female Adult, 25-35 years old, 5'6" tall, medium build, dark hair, wearing a skirt **Suspect vehicle:** red, newer SUV *the same suspects were denied use of the 76-year-old victim's bathroom in the 5200 block of Vanderhill at 4:30 p.m. on the same date after demonstrating a product that would remove oxidation from the victim's vehicle*

Saturday, August 4, 2012 at 6:37 p.m. in the 19900 block of Hawthorne: Suspects knocked on the 77-year-old victim's door and inquired if a camper and older model vehicle parked in her driveway were for sale, before asking to use the victim's bathroom and taking collectible coins from the master bedroom **Suspect-1:** Hispanic or Other Male Adult, 20-25 years old, 5'6" tall, medium build, brown eyes, short brown hair, light complexion, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans **Suspect-2:** Hispanic or Other Male Adult, 20-25 years old, 5'8" tall, thin build, brown eyes, short brown hair, olive complexion, wearing a burgundy plaid long sleeve flannel shirt – suspects spoke to each other in an unknown foreign language **Suspect vehicle:** newer, burgundy smaller SUV

BACKGROUND: Male suspects posing as legitimate workers approach elderly homeowners at their residences with the intent of gaining entry under a seemingly legitimate ruse. The real purpose is to divert the homeowner while accomplices search for currency and jewelry. Frequently used ploys include: claiming to be from the local electric company, water department or cable company, roofing, paving or other trade workers, city inspectors, surveyors and tree trimmers. In some instances, women and children accompany male suspects and participate in the diversion of the homeowner. The suspects may offer a rebate by giving the victim a \$100 bill with a request for change. This enables the suspect(s) to determine where the victim keeps currency in the house. The victim is distracted either inside the house turning on/off a light switch, knocking on water pipes or outside

observing damage, areas needing repair, determining property lines, etc. Once the victim is distracted, the unseen suspect(s) enters the home and removes currency, jewelry, valuables and documents in master bedrooms and/or wallets and purses near front doors.

Female suspects are responsible for the following:

Knocking on the doors of elderly residents and asking for water for their "sick" child or to use the restroom and then stealing valuables from the distracted victims' bedrooms

Accompanied by young children, begging in front of grocery stores and other commercial locations

Thefts of victims' wallets from their purses as they shop or dine

Swarming (three-five female suspects) predominately female-patronized shops such as salons to distract the employee(s) before targeting cash stashes in backrooms, purses and the register/counter areas

SUSPECT DESCRIPTION: Often described as Hispanic, Indian and Middle Eastern, from arrests, suspects are known to be of Romanian descent. They may be staying at a motel, apartment or trailer park and often work a large radius away from where they are staying. In other instances, the suspects are extremely mobile, stopping in an area only long enough to commit crimes and then moving on to the next target location. They often communicate with handheld radios or cellular phones while committing crime.

SUSPECT VEHICLE: These suspects generally drive pickup trucks, SUVs and vans, sometimes made to look like government or company vehicles. In some instances, rental vehicles are obtained specifically for use in these crimes.

**REPORT ANY INFORMATION BELIEVED TO BE RELATED
TO THIS CRIMINAL ACTIVITY TO THE TORRANCE
POLICE DEPARTMENT AT 310.328.3456**