



## Sunset Mesa Property Owners Association URGENT Notice

From Linda Kaye, President  
October 2, 2014

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### **SAVE THE DATE: October 15, 2014 6:30 PM, Venue TBD**

Dear Neighbors,

On October 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM a special security meeting is going to be held. You will be receiving a separate invite asking you to respond if you will attend. Please look for it and answer it. This will enable the Board to select a venue that will hold the respondent numbers, which we hope will be most, if not all of you. This meeting is held in conjunction with the West Hills Sheriff's Department, Palisades Patrol, ACS Security, and ADT Security. The purpose of the meeting is to advise you on security issues that are and will continue to affect the community.

Beginning last summer you were notified that the neighborhood had been experiencing an increasing number of burglaries. The community website, [www.sunsetmesa.org](http://www.sunsetmesa.org) began and continues to post safety tips as well as notifications of the burglaries, descriptions of the thefts, the perpetrators' behavior to gain entry into the homes of many of our residents, and suggestions on how to keep informed. These notices may or may not have been seen or taken seriously, but it was a call to stay vigilant. That call is even more pronounced now that we have been informed that there was an attempted entry with residents at home.

After receiving many calls from homeowners a pattern began to emerge. Again you were advised of the following:

1. Perpetrators. Four descriptions emerged:
  - Description 1: 2 black men and 1 black woman dressed in medical scrubs
  - Description 2: a group of 2 or 3, either all male or 2 males and 1 female
  - Description 3: solo Hispanic male
  - Description 4: solo white female
2. Descriptions 1 and 2 above behavior: Female (or male if no female) knocks or rings your bell. If no answer, a signal is given to the second (male), and the first goes back to the waiting car where the third is the driver. The second gains entry through an open gate, door, or window first. If nothing is open or unlocked, a second sweep and attempt to jar or pry a window or door is made. If unsuccessful, a window is broken.
3. Most items described stolen were heirloom jewelry, generally unmarked or un-serialized, easily moved (fenced) items such as Ipads, tablets, laptops, cash, identity items such as hard copy files with credit cards and passwords. In short, items easily stuffed into a backpack.

For the most part, reporting homeowners stated that even homes with security systems had attempted break-ins. Loud alarms, evidenced with security camera data, were deterrents in what was taken and the duration of the break-in, but did not deter the break-in itself. The louder the noise the shorter the time the criminal spent.

**It would not be a letter from the President without the opportunistic call for civic duty. We are not a large Board with our four (yes I repeat 4) active Board Members in this 475 home HOA. Juxtapose these figures to the very effective Castellammare HOA of 200 homes or the Pacific View Estates HOA with their 90 homes. Each boasts a substantial (greater than 75%) participation in their volunteer dues which are significantly higher than SMPOA's, in their calls to duty, their participation, their organization and their communication.** In short, there is a good deal of misinformation within the community about what your Board is purportedly not doing. That, unfortunately, is not only untrue, but unfair.

The most significant tasks of the Board are and remain:

1. **Organizing and maintaining a Board and Architecture Committee.** Without that function, the CC&Rs and the ocean view protections enjoyed by this community for more than 5 decades would cease to exist. Now, with the level of intense criminal activity, we are again asking for a positive and constructive response.
2. **What your Board has been working on.** As a Board, we reached out to the West Hills Sheriff's Department, ACS, ADT and Palisades Patrol. Additionally, we have met and conferred with the adjoining HOA's, understanding that this issue is one that all three communities are experiencing, and seeking a coalition to address this problem. In turn, Castellammare and Pacific View Estates have chosen to endorse ACS as their security provider, and have asked us to join them in that endeavor so that our strength in numbers can provide the most bang for our buck. It is my understanding that ACS has not only provided rates less expensive than the other providers, but has positive reviews and qualifications. The purpose of the meeting on October 15<sup>th</sup> is to allow our community to have a similar review of the available options and, similarly, cast our vote. This work has been done by the Board's Security Committee chaired by Gregg Bernstein.

Additionally, your Board, in conjunction with Sheriff's, LAPD, and other HOA's, has garnered these additional protections:

- Sheriff's, in conjunction with LAPD will begin bike patrol shortly in the Sunset Mesa. More details regarding this patrol will be forthcoming at the October 15 meeting. Also, the Board has been informed that arrests have been made in conjunction with some of these burglaries. More details regarding these arrests and the investigation will be forthcoming at the October 15 meeting.
- The Board has spoken to the Sheriff's Department about the fact that citizen-publicized burglaries in Sunset Mesa, 18 in total, are not consistent with the Sheriff's crime report. The Board has urged the Sheriff's Department to look into this and rectify these numbers, as well as being more vigilant with logging reports of suspicious persons or activities. The Sheriff's Department has been very responsive and cooperative, and has been an excellent partner to date. In kind, they have requested from the community that we report what we see, and understand that counter-surveillance is the tool of the criminal. They are watching for detection from police. Ask questions as to why someone is sitting in

their car, and if you have the sense that somebody is watching your home or neighborhood, believe that they are, and it is not your imagination. The Sheriff's Department needs all of us to be advocates for ourselves and for our neighborhood.

There is a separate group of homeowners not affiliated with the Board who organized to complete an initiative, started 3 years ago under a previous Board, to return to the Mesa a security contract that existed decades ago with ADT or to choose another security provider in that role. Having spoken with the prior President, it is my understanding that the purpose of that initiative had nothing to do with burglaries, as those had yet to begin, but, instead, was an effort by that Board to offer to the community an increased security package for a decreased rate based on purchasing power. There was no preference from that Board for ADT. They had spoken with both ADT and ACS, but, at the time of turning the governance over, only ADT had responded with specific proposal numbers. This independent group of homeowners had championed ADT as a solution, based, I believe, on their contention that the majority of homeowners in Sunset Mesa already utilize ADT service, and, therefore, there is an existing base. Nonetheless, they need the groundswell support of 200 homeowners to sign up for a 1 car patrol to service this community.

Whether those percentages assumed by this independent group bear out with ADT holding the preferential base, when you consider Castellammare's and Pacific View's determination to go with ACS instead, is yet to be determined. This is something your Board is also looking into. However, your Board has been informed by Castellammare that they have already obtained commitments from 150 of their residents to sign on with ACS.

The Board looks forward to your participation in the October 15<sup>th</sup> meeting, and urges your participation in your community even if the time you are donating is only an hour or two a month.

Sincerely,

Linda Kaye,  
President, SMPOA