

Dorm theft highest as semester begins

By Mary Shackleton

Residence hall thefts are highest at the beginning of semesters, according to Lt. Robert Edmunds of Campus Security and Sgt. Ken W. Nelson, of Residence Hall Security.

Freshmen students from rural communities are not "security conscious," Edmunds said. Usually, nothing has been stolen from them, and they don't believe it is necessary to lock their rooms or their cars, he said.

Many residence hall thefts occur when students leave rooms unlocked for short times, Edmunds said.

Clothing, jewelry, rings, watches, stereos, purses, billfolds, credit cards and cash are most often stolen, Nelson and Edmunds agreed.

"Pocket calculators are a big item being stole this year," Edmunds said.

Marking identification numbers on possessions with scribes, which are available in dormitories and may be checked out at Campus Security, would undoubtedly deter thefts, and increase the chance of recovery if an item were stolen, Edmunds said.

Campus Security now has about a 10% return rate on identifiable stolen items, he said.

When an item is reported stolen, Campus Security contacts the Lincoln Police Dept. and checks local pawn shops. If the item is worth \$100 or more, the National Criminal Investigation Commission also is notified, Edmunds said.

Personal profit is often the motive behind thefts, he said. Stolen items are usually those which can readily be turned into cash. For instance, he explained, if someone steals a stereo because he wants one, he usually pawns the stereo and uses the money to buy a new one.

Edmunds said he thinks most thefts are a means for obtaining money to support drug habits.

Nonstudents, in a ratio of 8 to 1, are responsible for on campus thefts, Edmunds said.

He said that thefts occur in other campus buildings besides just residence halls.

Recently, a faculty staff member reported that coffee funds and stamps were missing from his office. After a report such as this is filed, Campus Security officers start interviewing possible witnesses, he said.

Edmunds encouraged faculty members and students to report both personal thefts and thefts of University property to Campus Security.

"Faculty members and students have an obligation to the University to look out for University property," he said.

Along with using scribes to mark possessions, Edmunds encouraged persons to report thefts as soon as they are discovered.

"The longer the time lapse between the time the crime was committed and the time it is reported, the less the chance of apprehending the person responsible," he said.

If possible, students should check their cars frequently, he suggested.

Tape decks, cassettes, speakers and tires are items often taken from cars, he said.

One night Campus Security officers discovered 40 cars had been broken into and hadn't been reported, Edmunds said. There was nothing missing in most of the cars, he said.

When Campus Security officers locate an unreported stolen item all possible attempts are made to identify the owner—checking for serial numbers or identification numbers. If, after a considerable length of time, no one has claimed the items, they are auctioned, Edmunds said.

Last fall Campus Security began putting up public relations posters to make students and faculty more aware of its existence.

Future public relations campaigning will include more posters and having a brochure explaining what Campus Security does included in new students' packets. Campus Security office also will speak to faculty members, residence hall members and sororities, fraternities and custodial training groups.

In September 1972 Residence Hall Security was created under the supervision of Campus Security. Residence Hall Security employs 37 student officers and four commissioned police officers to patrol residence halls between 10:30 p.m. and 7 a.m. and to handle patrol schedules.

Tentative plans are being made to start a daytime patrol of residence halls, class buildings and administrative buildings, Edmunds said.

Student officers act mainly as preventative measure against residence hall crime, Nelson said.

While Residence Hall Security is under the Campus Security supervision, its employees are paid by the Housing office, Nelson said. Student officers are paid \$2.05 an hour their first year, \$2.10 an hour their second year and \$2.10 an hour if they are appointed student supervisor.

Many of the 37 student officers are law enforcement majors, he said. Three are women, Nelson said.

Nelson said he and the other commissioned police officers encourage "as much student involvement as possible" in operating the Residence Hall Security.

Before a student officer begins, he attends a training session which familiarizes him with state laws, drug recognition, handling bomb threats, first aid and investigation techniques.

The main duties of a student officer patrolling halls is to check out suspicious persons, answer the emergency night line and provide transportation to the University Health Center if needed.

Each hall has a three student officers patrolling nightly, with more on duty Fridays, Nelson said. The four commissioned officers, who work in pairs, patrol downstairs lounges and travel from hall to hall throughout the night.

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