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Crime increases linked to high gas prices

BY JILL CONNER

A big portion of Lincoln's 5.1 percent jump in crime rates comes from an unexpected source, said Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady.

The 71.3 percent increase in larceny from self-service gas stations was among the largest increases in the 2000 Crime Statistics released Tuesday by the Lincoln Police Department.

"People driving around without paying for their gas is what is driving our crime rate up," Casady said. He said he speculated the large increase was because of the rising gas prices and also because of an increasing number of gas stations.

Another problem could have been the unseasonably warm weather, he said.

"We had a very mild winter last year in January, February and March," Casady said.

Usually gas theft falls off decisively in the winter months, he said.

An answer to the problem might be requiring cus-

tomers to prepay for gas even though many customers don't appreciate the inconvenience, Casady said.

Gas stations on West O Street and Cornhusker Highway have been hit hardest, he said.

Casady said self-serve gas station thefts were not the only surprise in the crime statistics.

"I was probably most pleased to see that robberies did not continue their up trend," he said of the 12.4 percent decrease in robberies.

Casady said he was worried after robberies seemed to be rising steadily in the past few years.

Although robberies have decreased, the overall rate of burglaries increased 4.3 percent.

This year, while the rate of residential burglaries rose 9.4 percent, the rate of commercial burglaries fell 7.6 percent.

A robbery involves the use of violence, while burglary involves only entering a building. Larceny involving theft of personal property rose 6.4 percent.

Another significant increase occurred with rapes

reported to the Lincoln Police Department.

The rate of reported rapes rose 25 percent, from 80 to 100 cases.

"The number we've had in the past year is not out of line with the numbers we've had in the year 2000," Casady said. "Last year the number seemed unusually low."

Christine Clancy, a dispatcher for the University Police Department and Rape Aggression Defense class teacher said there has not been a rape reported on campus for about a year.

Clancy speculated the increase in rapes might be because more women are reporting them.

"They don't associate (rape) with such a (negative) stigma," she said.

Casady disagreed, saying there is no way of knowing if more rapes are being reported.

Other significant rate changes occurred in the murder category.

The number of murders in 1999 was nine, while there were only three in 2000.

Crime Detail

	1999	2000	Change
Murder	9	3	-66.7% (-6)
Rape	80	100	25% (20)
Robbery	161	141	-12.4% (-20)
Burglary	1,835	1,914	4.3% (79)
Larceny (drive-off with gas)	561	961	71.3% (400)

The Lincoln Police Department released 2000 crime statistics on Tuesday. Police officials attribute a spike in crime to gasoline drive-offs.

Source: Lincoln Police Department

Delan Lonowski/DN

SKATE PARK: Patrick Ferguson ollies off a low wall, making use of his week off from school to seek fun on the university campus. He and others skate on campus because they say the only other place to skate that has what they want costs \$6 per hour.



Nate Wagner/DN

Legislature

Bill could cut cell use

BY GWEN TIETGEN

The debate over whether Nebraskans chatting on cell phones is a real cause of car accidents could finally be settled if one legislative bill passes.

The Transportation and Telecommunications Committee on Tuesday heard the bill, LB43, which would cite cellular phone use on motor vehicle accident reports.

The bill was introduced by Sen. David Landis of Lincoln in conjunction with another bill, LB 42, also introduced by Landis.

LB43 would note on an accident report if a cellular phone was in the car or in use during an accident, said Laurel Marsh, a legislative aide for Landis.

The information collected from the accident report notations would determine if cellular phones are a continuing factor in accidents, Marsh said.

The other bill, LB42, would cite the operator with partial fault in an accident if a cellular phone was in use. The bill is similar to one the Legislature killed last year.

In the LB42 committee hearing, senators questioned whether legislation was needed to add this information to accident reports and decided to hold the bill in the committee for further review.

Several wireless telephone companies want other distractions, such as loud music playing in the car or application of makeup while driving, to be noted on accident reports, not just cellular phone citations, said Sen. Curt Bromm of Wahoo, who is also chairman of the committee.

Former NU defense coach admits to drunken driving

Charlie McBride's probation includes a fine and attending alcohol education classes in accordance with a first-time offense.

BY JILL CONNER

Retirement may not be all that former Assistant Husker Football Coach Charlie McBride expected it to be.

McBride, 61, who worked as the NU defensive coordinator and retired after 23 years in January 2000, pled guilty Tuesday to the charge of driving under the influence he received Dec. 15.

McBride and his attorney, Michael J. Hansen, requested probation for McBride, who is taking alcohol education classes.

McBride's probation requires that he pay a fine, attend alcohol education classes and attend six Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

McBride's probation term started Tuesday and ends in January 2002.

His driver's license was revoked for 60 days as part of his sentencing, and he must abstain from drinking alcohol during his probation.

A third aspect of the probation prohibits him from going to bars or any place that makes its main profit from the sale of alcohol.

Hansen said McBride's year-long probation was a normal sentence for a first offense.



McBride

"It is disheartening when any member of the community, especially a role model, gets picked up for DUI."

Simera Reynolds

Mothers Against Drunk Driving executive director

McBride could not be reached for comment. McBride was stopped shortly after 1 a.m. in December for running a red light.

According to the Lincoln Police Department, his blood-alcohol level was .125, or .025 above the legal limit.

McBride was cited for driving under the influence of alcohol and taken to Cornhusker Place Detox.

Simera Reynolds, executive director for the state chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, said she hoped the community learned from McBride's error.

"It is disheartening when any member of the community, especially a role model, gets picked up for DUI," Reynolds said. "It just goes to show that alcohol is a pervasive factor in drinking and driving."

Reynolds said the best answer to the problem of drinking and driving is finding a designated driver.

Reynolds said the Lincoln Police Department made 222 drunken driving arrests during the month of December.

"The community can't turn their head and say this isn't a problem," Reynolds said.

New ag head ready to go

The new vice chancellor for IANR is already impressed with UNL's reputation.

BY JILL ZEMAN

Despite leaving sunny New Mexico for Nebraska's unpredictable weather, UNL's newest administrator said he's happy to be in Lincoln.

John Owens, the new vice chancellor for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, had a chilly welcome in December when he moved to Nebraska during a near blizzard.

Owens left New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, where he served as executive vice president and chief academic officer since 1977, to become the institute's top leader.

What drew Owens to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he said, was the positive attitude of the faculty members and students.

"The people are unbelievably friendly," he said.

Owens said he was impressed with the reputation of the institute, as well as the research conducted there.

"East Campus is an absolute treasure for the state," he said.

UNL's academic and athletic reputations put it ahead of other institutions in the nation, he said.

"No matter what the local

newspaper has said lately, the University of Nebraska is an academic powerhouse," he said.

"I see the institute in such good shape that there's nothing I need to come in and fix," he said.

The local newspaper Owens referred to was the Omaha World-Herald, and its recent series, "UNL: Confronting Mediocrity," which charges the university is simply so-so.

Owens received his bachelor's degree in biology from West Texas State University, which is now West Texas A&M in Canyon.

He went on to receive his master's degree in entomology from Texas Tech University in Lubbock and his doctorate, also in entomology, from Iowa State University in Ames.

Owens also served as a professor of entomology at Iowa State and Texas Tech.

Owens replaced Irv Omtvedt, who retired in June. Associate Vice Chancellor Edna McBreen served as interim vice chancellor during the hunt for a new leader.

McBreen, who was a candidate for the position, said she was impressed with Owens because of his commitment to the students.

An upper-level administrator who wants to work directly with students is just what the university needs, McBreen said.

"I'm just thrilled he's here," she said.



Nate Wagner/DN

John Owens, vice chancellor for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources is welcomed by faculty, staff and administrators from various UNL departments. Owens recently arrived in Lincoln from New Mexico State University to take over the vice chancellor position.

Owens is taking over as vice chancellor at a point when the institute is in the public eye.

The 20/20 report, which outlines goals for the university in the next 20 years, focuses on IANR as an integral part of UNL's future.

With the spotlight on Owens and the institute, McBreen said she was confident he'd do a good job.

"There aren't any easy (transitions), but we're talking about a guy who knows what he's doing," she said.