

Take a bite out of CRIME

By Sandy Johnstone
Of the Emerald

As the doorknob of the apartment turns, the couple watches with anxious eyes. But the locked door will keep the burglar away — this time.

Simple precautions, like locking doors and windows, are often enough to keep a thief away, according to Sgt. Rick Allison of the Eugene Police Department.

But many people don't take the time to become adequately protected and end up victims, he says.

Last year in the campus area there were about 150 burglaries and 498 reported cases of thefts involving \$200 or more. Some 21.7 percent of campus area thefts and 18.7 percent of campus-area burglaries are solved. The national average is about 13 percent.

For the amount of geographical space involved, there is a lot of crime, but when the number of people in the area are considered, it is about average, says Allison.

Students need to reduce their chances of being victimized, says Allison.

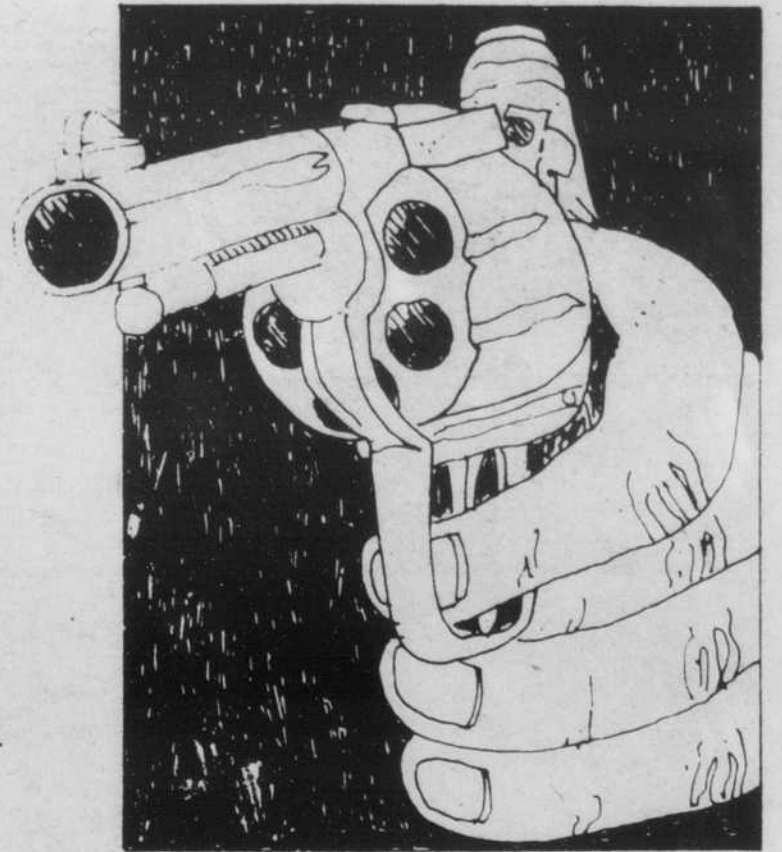
First, they should take the time to look at the security arrangement of the apartment or house.

Then, they need to use them. Many burglars are enticed by an open door or window, says Allison.

Also, mark and engrave valuables. Use an Oregon driver's license or Oregon identification number, not a social security number. Social security numbers cannot be looked up by the police department, according to law. Engravers can be borrowed from the police department and campus security.

If numbers are on the stolen goods, then the chance of getting the materials back are much better. Thousands of dollars of merchandise is auctioned off by the police each year because they can't find its owners, says Allison.

Burglary and theft are crimes of opportunity so be aware of anything that happens out of the ordinary, Allison



Emerald graphic

says. "They find the opportunites and cash in on them," Allison says.

If someone comes to the door and asks for a hammer, be wary. The person may just want the tool, but they might have been trying to find out if anyone was home. If no one had answered, a robbery could have occurred.

Often, when a person answers the phone and the other person hangs up quickly, someone is trying to find out if any one is home. If no one is home, the house may get robbed.

Juveniles commit the majority of crimes in Eugene and they may happen any time of the day, he says. Professional thieves more often prefer the cover of darkness, says Allison.

Dorm residents, especially those on the first floors, should try not to tempt would-be thieves by leaving expensive objects, such as stereos, right under windows. They should also be cautious when letting strangers into the dorm to see someone, if they don't know either person involved.

"Dorm residents grow accustomed to the new friends and feel a security that is not there," says Allison. "We don't want students to live in fear, but they need to be realistic and realize that these things (theft and burglary) really exist."

One common example of a dorm robbery happens in men's dorms. Many men tend to leave their wallets in the top drawer under the half closet. Burglars can easily open doors and slip their hands in the drawer, take the wallet and leave without waking up the sleeping person.

"It's a normal occurrence," says Allison.

There are low cost alarms that students can invest in to make their apartments or dorms more secure. For example, a door alarm that will fit over the doorknob and will go off if the door starts to open will scare off most burglars. There are also units available that are sensitive to motion and will go off when the doorknob turns.

Allison also cautions people not to carry around extra money that they may have because it is the beginning of the term. Thieves are aware that many people may have extra-full wallets at this time of year and are more likely to prey on students, he says.

The police need the student's cooperation in order to effectively fight crime he says. Too often, students will stand by and watch a crime being committed. For example, two years ago, an Emerald reporter took wire cutters and stole a bike to see if anyone would respond — no one did. (The bike actually belonged to the reporter.)

"We must have people involved."

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