

University student endeavors to change dorms' safety policy

By Mary Lichtenwalner
Of the Emerald

Several dorm residents are horsing around, and one accidentally puts a hand through a glass window. It's a bloody scene, so one student calls the resident assistant for help.

Housing Director Marjory Ramey thinks this is a good reaction. The resident assistant knows how to apply first aid and is aware of where the first-aid kit is located, she says.

That's fine, agrees University student Steve Richkind, as long as there actually is a kit available. But he says that remedy is not realistic because only one kit is located in each dorm complex. That means there's only one kit for about 500 people, Richkind says.

Most students don't know where that one kit is located, either, Richkind says. He's trying to encourage the Housing Department to require readily available first-aid kits in every dorm.

"I think until a person forces the Housing Department to put in kits, they won't do anything. (The Housing Department) is worried about liability," Richkind says.

Richkind presented the matter to the Hamilton complex president's council Monday and the Carson-Earl complex president's council Wednesday. He says a resident assistant at Wednesday's meeting was definitely opposed to his proposal. "She felt it was another added responsibility to be nurse by simply having the kit in her room," he says.

Ramey, however, says Richkind's concern is unnecessary. "It doesn't answer any particular need as yet. A person who cuts a finger should be able to supply their own Band-Aids," he says.

Dorm residents have had a need for such kits but have been surprised to find they are difficult or impossible to locate, Richkind says. He says although the kits are necessary for minor injuries only, that doesn't decrease the need.

The use of the kits is

discouraged, that's why there's only one per complex," Richkind says. "That's not adequate. They should have one per dormitory."

Dormitory resident assistants are trained in first-aid fall term, says James Jackson, Student Health Center director. "And I believe they know where the kits are," he says.

But Clark Hall resident assistant, Karl Gates, says he was never told where the dorm's kit is located. In fact, he says his area manager told him last week the Walton complex first-aid kit had just arrived, a little late. Gates says he assumes the kit will be located in the resident assistant lounge.

No residents have received serious injuries in the complex, Gates says. "But I keep Band-Aids myself and give them out," he says.

The Housing Department is taking a risk by providing the training and the kits that are available, Ramey says. Liability is always a concern, but it's a chance the University must take, she says.

Until about six years ago, the resident assistants were not given any first-aid training because of the proximity of such professional services as Sacred

Heart General Hospital, the health center and the Eugene Fire and Emergency Services, Ramey says.

"I've chosen to take a somewhat limited risk, but we're not going to go into a full-scale training program for R.A.s because it simply isn't our role," Ramey says. "We're not a health agency."

Richkind argues that point, citing the fact that the health center closes at 8 p.m. and the hospital is a distance for those injured, especially if transportation is not accessible, he says. "What happens then?" he asks.

One answer, Ramey says, lies with campus security. If a student needs professional care immediately, the resident assistant will call security for help and transportation, she says.

Richkind plans to pursue the issue further, possibly circulating some petitions and sending them to legislators to push for new legislation.

"Most people don't even know that there are any first-aid kits; there's this false security. And their parents probably don't even know," Richkind says. "I want their parents to know there are no first-aid kits, and I want students to know."

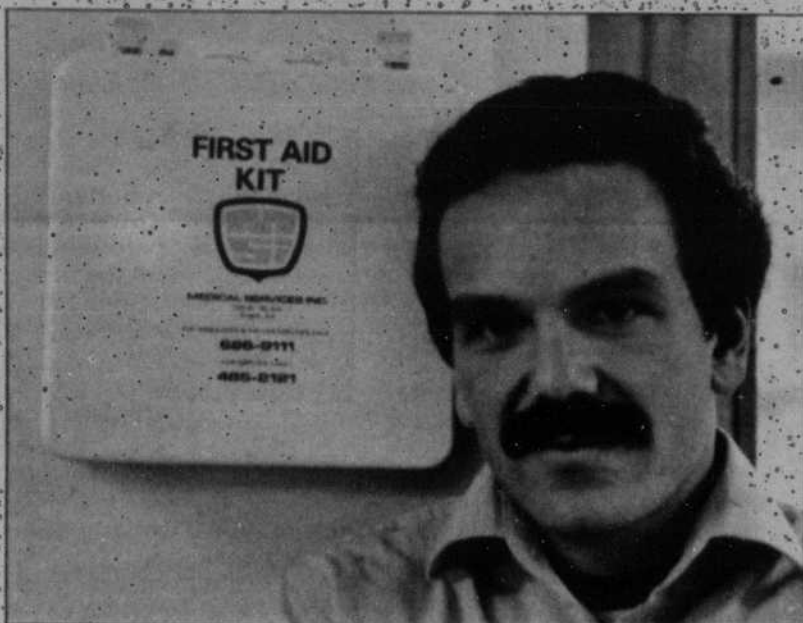


Photo by Karen Stallwood
University student Steve Richkind wants the University's housing department to place first-aid kits in every dormitory.

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