

Bicycle disappearance not always due to theft

By Deborah Janes

Of the Emerald

When University junior Rob Halpern stepped out of Allen Hall last November, he faced an ugly surprise: his bike was gone.

The bicycle was parked in a restricted area and consequently was impounded by University security officers.

"When I came out of my class and saw that my bike was gone, I just assumed that it was stolen. But when I called Campus Security the next day to report it, they said they had it there," Halpern said.

Halpern's bike was locked to a handicap-access bar, which is a common cause for impoundment, according to University Security Bike Director Suzie Hunter. Other reasons for impoundment, besides parking in a restricted area, include blocking a building's entryway, abandoning a bike, or lack of registration, Hunter said.

Since January 1987, Campus Security has impounded 62 bikes, according to Hunter's records. Of those, 36 have been reclaimed by their owners. The remaining 26 will be sold at an auction in June.

"We certainly don't want to sell a bike that belongs to someone," said Security Associate Director Dick Tanner. "We exhaust every means to find the owners."

If the bike is registered, the security officer usually can locate the owner by using the registration records. But that is not foolproof, Hunter said. "Students move around so much; we may not have their current address." In the case of an abandoned bicycle, the security officer will review Eugene Police Department records to determine if the serial number correlates with a reported stolen bike.

If the bike is not registered, the chances of security locating the owner are slim, Hunter said. "They usually come in and pick it up themselves. If they parked it in a restricted area, they know where to find it," she said.

Hunter and other officers regularly remove abandoned bikes, commonly parked in the

dormitory areas. "You can tell when they've been left behind — they are usually junkers, dusty with cobwebs and flat tires. If they're registered, we call the owner, who usually says 'oh yeah, I forgot about my bike.'" Hunter said in the year she has been on bike patrol, she has never mistakenly impounded a bike actively being used for one she determined as abandoned.

Upon reclaiming the bike, the owner must pay a number of fines. Parking in a restricted area results in a \$5 fine, plus a \$5 fee for impoundment and possibly a \$2 fine for lack of registration.

Revenues earned from these citations are collected in a fund to cover campus bike-related costs, such as the purchase of additional bicycle racks.

Security refrains from placing a \$2 citation on unregistered bikes they spot on campus because there is no way to ensure the owner will make the payment, Hunter said.

However, if a security officer recognizes a bike that has had a registration warning placed on it and still is unregistered, the officer may haul it away, she said.

A regulation enacted in 1983 in the University of Oregon Administration Rules says bike registration is mandatory, according to Muriel Jackson, assistant vice-president for administration. "One of the arguments favoring mandatory registration was that those registrations provide the police with a way to identify the owner," she said in explaining the discussion surrounding the regulation enactment.

"I don't make the regulations, I'm just enforcing them," Hunter said.

A registered bike has a greater chance of being reunited with its owner if it is stolen, Tanner said. "If it's stolen, the owner can use the registration to prove

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Here, Shoshana, one of about 30 children to participate in the hunt, examines an egg she found — one of the 15 dozen hidden by organizers of the event.



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