

Bicycle thefts increase, universities favorite target

By Tamara Jones
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

It was only a quick question you had to ask about your financial aid, so you hopped off your bike, threw a U-lock around the frame and dashed into Oregon Hall.

When you came out 20 minutes later, your bike was gone. Nothing was left behind, not even a trace of your lock. For a moment you stop and think that maybe you didn't ride your bike after all.

As you stand in front of the bike rack dazed, the agonizing reality that your bike was stolen sets in. Feeling violated, and trying to figure out who and why someone would take YOUR bike, you start the process of filing police reports, inquiring to the manufacturer of the U-lock about being reimbursed for the failure of its product and trying to get insurance money.

The above three steps are neither easy nor time efficient. To file a police report one must know his or her serial number. This alone is problematic: many people don't know it, nor do they know where it is on their bike. When you contact the manufacturer of your U-lock, you find that if no remnants of the lock were left behind, then there is no way to prove that you locked your bike with its product.

If you have insurance on your bike, the process to get money for your stolen property takes a while, not to mention that by the time you subtract your deductible, your wallet still suffers.

"There is a false sense of security with U-locks," said Erik Ott, vice president of Integrated Cycle Systems. "People often don't realize that it takes 7 seconds to break a U-lock with a car jack or pipe."

ICS manufactures a product known as B.A.D. Bones, which are red steel braces that slide on the shackle of the lock. These devices protect the vulnerable areas of the lock that can be easily broken with a car jack or pipe. The National Crime Prevention Institute, ICS and the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators released a sur-

vey recently showing that bike theft has increased 60 percent on college campuses since 1989.

"A lot of people who do not understand how to properly lock their bike become victims of bike theft," Ott said.

Bicycle thefts total more than half a billion dollars in lost property annually. The advent of mountain bikes has increased interest in cycling and has tripled the average cost of the bicycle. This alone has led to an alarming increase in theft.

About 20 million Americans use a U-lock, and most of these users believe that their lock is invincible. However, they are vulnerable to car jacks and pipes and recent surveys show that every 15 seconds a \$300 bike is stolen.

One does not need to live in a densely populated, urban area to worry about theft. More and more rural areas are being targeted.

"University areas are especially sought out by thieves," Ott said. "They leave the city and go to campuses where they have hundreds and thousands of bikes to choose from — many of them improperly locked."

For Oregon bike-theft victims, it is not as much U-lock failure as it is negligence. Bike shop employees around the state agree that many victims who come into shops looking for a replacement bike are there because they failed to lock their bikes. Many victims had their bikes stolen from their property, either out of their garage or backyard.

Tim Birr of the Eugene police department said that from January of this year to the end of August, 684 bikes were reported stolen.

"In an average year a greater loss in terms of dollar value occurs in bike thefts than bank robberies in this area," Birr said.

In 1992 the estimated value of stolen bikes was \$479,506, and robberies only totaled in at \$84,157. Birr's advice for concerned bike owners is to "know your serial number" because without this, police cannot track down the owner of confiscated bikes.

Do not think that there is no way to prevent your bike from

Safeguarding against campus theft

By Susanne Steffens
Oregon Daily Emerald

The first week of school is over, a week when thousands of students ran out and bought new and old bicycles to use as their main source of transportation.

It was also the week when a number of students fell victim to bicycle thieves.

Bicycle theft has become the most prevalent crime on campus. During the 1992-93 school year, \$66,358 worth of bicycles were stolen, and this new year could easily increase the sum. The idea of being cautious and aware of the professional thieves running around campus is becoming increasingly important, as thieves can steal a bike within 20 seconds.

Eugene police officer Judy Rodenhuis said the most sophisticated thieves have learned how to defeat both cable and U-lock mechanisms. It's therefore important to be aware of better ways of safeguarding a bicycle. Rodenhuis suggests several:

1. Always lock the bicycle frame to a fixed object.
2. Leave the bike in a well-lit area.
3. Record the serial number of the bike, and register the bike at the University Office of Public Safety.

Rodenhuis further suggests not to keep the

bike outside during the night and said students living in residence halls should be extremely cautious, because this area is continually visited by thieves. Taking the bike inside and also locking it to a secure object is the best way to prevent the bike from being stolen.

Besides bicycles being stolen, losses from items stolen inside vehicles amounted to \$43,356 during the 1992-1993 school year, and most of these losses came from vehicles parked overnight in lots around campus.

The worst place to park the car both during the day and the night is the lot on East 15th Avenue and Moss Street, where cars are broken into weekly. Rodenhuis said students should park their cars in a well-lit location and not leave any valuables in the car. Far too often, expensive stereos are taken, when they could have been removed or covered by the owner.

For students who don't own bicycles or cars, the thieves can still bother them through backpack and purse thefts, which seem to be the most alarming problem for students today.

The thieves can easily sell textbooks from the backpack and earn a little profit, so Rodenhuis said students should mark their property with their name or other identification, and keep the property secured. Diverting your eyes from your backpack for a few seconds can be enough time for a thief to steal your belongings.

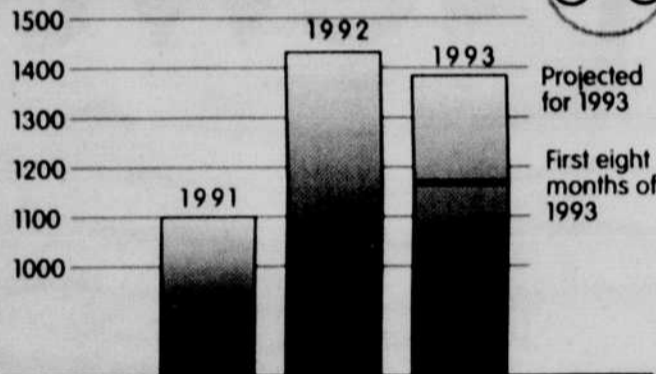
being stolen. With a few extra minutes and knowing how to correctly use your lock, your bike can be protected.

The first and most important measure one can take is to lock your bike. Tom Lawrence, Phil Goodrich and Eric Sampson of Collins' Cycle Shop recommend weaving a cable through your wheels and joining the ends through the U-shaped part of the U-lock.

The U-lock itself should be put around the frame and then through a bike rack. Be careful not to put the U-lock through the front wheel only. Always lock your bike when it's on your porch or in your garage and never assume that "it can't happen to me."

When you take on an apathetic attitude and become lazy about always locking your bike, you increase your chances of becoming the next victim. Bike theft can be deterred.

BICYCLE THEFTS IN EUGENE



PREVENTING THEFT

- Always lock the bicycle frame to a fixed object
- Leave the bike in a well-lit area
- Record the serial number of the bike and register the bike at OPS

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- *Peace Corps Experience-Video*
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