

# Police find vending machine vandal suspect

The suspect used a crowbar in attempts to break in to campus vending machines; damages have cost \$2,100

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Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

The Department of Public Safety has received 25 reports of vandalized vending machines since September 2002, with more than \$2,100 in damage to units on campus. But after months of investigation and a long day of close-calls, a foot pursuit and the capture of a suspect, DPS and Eugene Police Department officers said they have identified and charged an individual linked to several campus reports of damage or theft.

The suspect, who has been released from custody, is not considered responsible for all of the reported vandalism, Associate Director Tom Hicks said. However, DPS has not received any new reports on campus since the suspect's apprehension.

"But maybe that's just pure coincidence," Hicks said.

Since fall term, DPS received eight vandalized phone card machine reports — all of which occurred in the EMU — equaling \$1,700 in damage. Approximately \$400 in damage has been estimated as a result of 15 vandalized vending machine reports, which have occurred in the Education Building, Gerlinger Annex, PLC, Hamilton Complex and Huestis, Pacific, Straub and Willamette halls. One gumball machine and one video

game machine in the EMU have also been vandalized, both of which incurred unknown damage costs.

The suspect linked to at least four of these incidents, 38-year-old John Charles Graves, was spotted attempting to vandalize a vending machine with a crowbar in PLC at about 5 p.m. March 8. The instructor who witnessed the incident reported that Graves fled the scene with a black duffel bag before the arrival of EPD officers, who proceeded to contact DPS. DPS officers informed them of a recent investigation regarding several vandalism reports linked to a similarly described suspect.

An hour later, a DPS officer called for assistance during a foot pursuit of Graves, who was spotted at Agate Hall. Before he fled the scene in his vehicle, Graves dropped a crowbar wrapped in a jacket. Lane County Sheriff's officers later apprehended Graves after he tried to hide in bushes along Interstate-5 in the Glenwood Area.

DPS positively identified Graves from the Agate Hall pursuit, and he was logged at Lane County Jail for two charges of burglary.

The next afternoon, DPS officers retrieved a duffel bag that matched the description reported at the PLC incident in the brush along a trail at Laurel Hill, northeast of Moon Mountain. EPD spokeswoman Pam Olshanski said the bag contained an undisclosed amount of money, as well as a collection of "burglary tools."

After Graves was apprehended, DPS was able to link him to several burglary and theft cases, including

vandalism to a phone card machine in January from which fingerprints were obtained, EPD Lt. Herb Horner said.

"He got so comfortable coming here without getting caught that he just got bolder," he added.

Graves was released from Lane County Jail shortly after his arrest because the jail system in Eugene is understaffed and overflowing, Horner said.

"If the individual poses no physical threat, the jail does not hold on to him for very long," he said.

The manager of Canteen Vending — the local company responsible for installing, servicing and repairing damaged machines at the University for more than 20 years — confirmed Hicks' assertion that no vending machines have been vandalized on campus for the past three weeks.

"We really applaud DPS for their investigations of these crimes," District Operations Manager Dave King said. "These guys have really been bulldogs on this thing."

King said the task of servicing machine vandalism varies greatly from assessing small damage to taking entire units to the junkyard.

"Some are totally destroyed," he added. "And the University doesn't cover the cost — we do."

DPS officers advise students and faculty to report all suspicious subjects, activity or evidence of vending machine vandalism as soon as they are witnessed.

Contact the reporter at [caronalarab@dailyemerald.com](mailto:caronalarab@dailyemerald.com).



Photo illustration: Adam Amato and Mark McCambridge Emerald

DPS has received 25 reports of vending machine vandalism since last September, and DPS and EPD have tracked down a suspect.

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