

# Bike theft, 'casing' reports increasing

Reports by DPS and EPD note that several people have been arrested after casing bikes in the campus area

**Caron Alarab**  
Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

Department of Public Safety reports showed spring break to be a quiet holiday from most campus crimes. But in a college community known for its consistent problems with bike theft, it was no surprise to DPS officers that reports of suspicious subjects "casing" campus bike racks — checking locks with the intention of later stealing the bikes — were received at different points during the last week of March.

Although DPS and the Eugene Police Department reports show a winter term rise followed by, most recently, a decline in bike thefts around campus, two recent arrests and an increase in community involvement make officers anticipate a further downward trend.

"Regardless, bike theft remains our biggest problem on campus," DPS Sgt. Jeff Breno said.

According to EPD reports, 38 bike thefts were reported in the campus area in January and February, compared with 22 reports

filed during the same months a year ago. EPD spokeswoman Kerry Delf said there is no way to tell if that trend will continue, but that bike theft has been more prominent in the University area this year so far.

"We've had a lot fewer reports over the last few weeks," Breno said. "Which could have something to do with recent arrests."

During spring break, DPS received a report of two suspicious subjects walking around bike racks along Columbia Street near East Campus Housing. When officers contacted the individuals at 1 p.m. on March 26, they found controlled substances on 19-year-old Marcell Devon Rockwell and two outstanding warrants for 18-year-old Travis Gene Sellers.

Shortly before 2 p.m., EPD officers arrested them. Rockwell was charged for unlawful possession of controlled substances, and Sellers was arrested on the outstanding warrants. Although Sellers and Rockwell were apprehended for violations unrelated to bike theft, Breno said similar arrests in the past have led to information eventually linking suspects to the crime.

On March 27, a University employee contacted DPS to report two suspicious subjects casing the



Mark McCambridge Emerald

According to DPS Sgt. Jeff Breno, bike theft is the department's biggest problem on campus.

bike racks along Walton Complex. When they were contacted by DPS officers, both individuals were positively identified as employees of a contractor on campus and the report was cleared as unfounded, Associate Director Tom Hicks said.

Another suspicious subject was reported to be casing the bike racks at Bean Complex the morning of March 29. Once contacted by DPS officers, the individual had

no explanation for being at the racks — or on campus — and officers informed him that he would be cited for trespassing if he was reported to be casing again.

Although the two most recent reports did not result in EPD arrests or DPS-issued citations, Hicks said the role played by those who report suspicious subjects and activity on campus is important.

"Public safety can only be as effective as the diligence of the campus community," Hicks said. "We depend upon people to report and be alert to individuals and activities out of the ordinary and we encourage community members not to hesitate in reporting anything of concern."

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

## Taxes

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Shawn George, the IRS spokeswoman for Oregon, said each company has a different set of qualification requirements for the services, adding that she thought college students would not have a problem receiving Free File services. If a taxpayer does not qualify for Free File services, however, they can still e-file with tax companies, such as H&R Block, for a fee.

Eugene has several locations where people volunteer to help others with taxes. Two of the sites

offer e-filing: Super Site, located at 275 W. 11th Ave., is open from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Wednesday and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursdays, and the Singer Conference Room in the Eugene Public Library, which is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. Both sites accept walk-in appointments, and will be open through April 15.

E-filing, which requires no additional paperwork to be sent to the IRS, also speeds up the refund process. Some businesses offering e-filing services also provide refund anticipation loans. With this

service, a refund check goes back to the taxpayer within two to three days. H&R Block offers the refund anticipation service for a fee of 35 dollars plus interest.

E-T Tax Service, located in Eugene, is one of many businesses that will not offer. Jayne Williams, an employee of E-T Tax Service, said refund anticipation loans don't help clients because they would lose money on interest rates that the bank charges. She added some people don't realize it is a loan from a company, which means it costs the client extra money.

"No one can get their money back in two days," she said.

George said it takes about 10 days for the IRS to send a refund check to those who e-file, and also request that the check be electronically transferred into a checking or savings account.

According to the Oregon Department of Revenue, more than 414,000 Oregon taxpayers filed their income taxes electronically, a 20 percent increase over the previous year. Officials with the department said they expect to receive more than half a million e-filed returns this year.

Stacey Weeks, the department's alternative filing coordinator, said in a press release that many people prefer e-filing because of convenience.

"It takes an average of one to two hours to complete a tax return electronically, versus 10 to 12 hours by pen and paper," Weeks said.

For more information on e-filing, visit <http://www.irs.gov/efile/index.html>.

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## Police

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problems occurring at events, even if they involve only a few people, rather than on the participants' overall message. He added the individuals causing problems with police forces are often not associated with the main event and are merely "troublemakers."

Campus protests and events have been largely peaceful, Department of

Public Safety Interim Director Tom Hicks said. DPS officers work with organizers of events to ensure a safe environment.

"Generally, there's been some preparation beforehand," Hicks said. "We first try to gain the cooperation of the organizers and form agreements about what is going to occur at the event."

DPS officers make uniformed showings at scheduled campus

events, and Hicks said officers are ready to take action if an event is unsafe or if activities disrupt normal University business.

"If an order is given by either a DPS or EPD officer, it is in the students' best interest to comply," Hicks said. "So far, people have been pretty cooperative. Events have been done in safe manner and have not disturbed the University."

But events scheduled off campus

have not been as peaceful or cooperative, Eugene Peace Works Board Member Phil Weaver said.

"We've had a mixed relationship with police," Weaver said. "There's been a real lack of genuineness on the part of the police in terms of their willingness and desire to work with the anti-war movement."

Weaver cited EPD's continued use of video cameras and surveillance during marches as a sign of distrust to-

ward activists. Instead of attempting to intimidate participants, he said he would like to see police officers maintain safety during marches.

"It's a political statement by the police to be breaking up peaceful protests," Weaver said. "It would be very easy for police to remain peaceful."

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

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