

Crime prevention begins with awareness

SUSAN COOPER Staff Writer

Campus safety is an issue that affects everyone on campus.

Crime is a factor everywhere, and knowing how to keep yourself and others safe is very important.

According to Danny Baker, the assistant dean of the College of Criminal Justice, most crimes result when people do not protect themselves from criminals.

"Crime equals opportunity divided by desire. If someone has the desire to commit a crime, there is nothing we can do about it, but we can do something about opportunity," Baker said.

The Office of Housing Security is responsible for several policies which are attempting to improve campus security.

According to Donna Height, coordinator of Housing, Security and Judicial programs, the department of housing helps inform and coordinate programs with residence hall directors and residence assistants.

Through these programs, RHDs and RAs can provide information to the residents about how to keep themselves safe and the dorms secure.

Some suggestions for residents are: lock all doors and windows before leaving the room, lock the door when you're in the room alone, and to call the police if anything suspicious occurs.

Corporals Pattie Weed and Jeff Wingard of the University of South Carolina Police Department Bike Patrol encourage residents to secure items in their rooms even when going down the hall.

Wingard said, "It only takes a couple of seconds for someone to walk in to your room and grab something."

According to Baker, residence halls try to create a sense of community for students based on trust, but he said students should not leave their belongings unsecured.

"Most thefts that occur are students stealing from other students," he said.

Baker also said it is a good idea to let people you trust

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Danny Baker, assistant dean of the College of Criminal Justice

know where you are going and when you expect to return.

According to Baker, dating behavior is also overlooked by students and should be given more attention.

Sexual assault on college campuses occurs most often in dating situations, according to Baker. He also said knowing who you are going out with and setting the boundaries in terms of the date helps avoid the opportunity for a crime to happen.

According to Baker, dating students should be aware that the majority of this type of crime occurs when someone is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

"You want to be in command and not be at someone's mercy," he said.

Security for residence halls is handled by desk assistants (DAs). They are part of the round-the-clock rotation at a dorms' front desk.

Height said DAs check IDs and room keys when people enter a dorm and check to see if they are residents or signed-in guests.

"People pay big money to get this kind of security, and students see it as infringing on their rights and privacy," Baker said. "But really it is trying to enhance a safe and secure environment."

There are several ways to avoid becoming a victim to crime.

First, avoid walking, jogging or riding your bike alone at night, according to Carl Stokes, director of law enforcement and safety.

"Don't walk in a dark, secluded area by yourself. Walk with someone else. Know where you are going, and go directly there. And have some way of notifying others," he said.

Another way to keep yourself safe is to avoid shortcuts through alleys or parking lots. Stay in well-lit and well-trav-

eled areas.

A map of safe routes on campus can be picked up in the SG office in the Russell House.

If you find yourself out late at night, call a friend to come pick you up, or use one of the on-campus organizations to take you home.

Weed and Wingard ask guys to walk female friends home at night. Both officers have seen girls walk out of male dorms alone late at night.

"Gentlemen be gentlemen and walk the ladies home," Wingard said.

If you don't have anyone to walk you home, the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity offers an escort service that can be called at 777-3825. They will take you to and from anywhere on campus between 8 and 12 p.m. during fall and spring semesters.

Mike Brown, the fraternity's service vice president, said the escort service "clearly provides a higher level of safety within the university." Campus police can also be called upon to provide a ride home.

By being aware of the things around you, you can help deter crime. According to a safety pamphlet from the Division of Law Enforcement and Safety, this can be done by "keeping your eyes and ears open" and reporting any suspicious activity to the campus police.

The police should be contacted if you hear any unusual noises like glass breaking or screaming, notice an emergency like a fire, find someone soliciting in a dorm room or see anyone running from a car or building carrying property.

New students need to be aware of the risks of living on campus.

"Freshmen women are at greater risk of sexual assault because they are testing their limits," Height said.

Baker said, "As freshmen, we want to be liked, accepted, we



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USC police officers use bicycles when they need to mobilize quickly.

want to fit in. Arriving on campus, there's a certain modification of behavior that needs to take place."

According to Stokes, USC's campus is pretty safe compared to other cities and municipalities in the state.

Stokes said there were about 900 crimes on campus last year. The majority were crimes against property, being, theft and larceny.

For more information on cam-

pus safety and related programs, the division of law enforcement and safety and the office of Crime Awareness can be contacted in the Byrnes building at 777-8400.

For more information on getting involved in campus safety programs, or voicing your concerns, you can contact Housing and Security at 777-7806 or Student Government at 777-2654.

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