

Police push awareness, responsibility

Campus, city officials tout walking in groups, taking the shuttle, locking doors

Steven Van Haren

EDITOR

Campus and city police are stressing personal awareness and accountability to help reduce crime at the start of the school year.

"USC: Use sense and caution," said Ernie Ellis, director of USC's Law Enforcement and Safety division. "I think it's most important for people to be very aware of their surroundings."

Ellis said some students aren't used to a metropolitan area, and should walk in groups and use the shuttle system at night.

"So many students ... are from areas that are not as large as Columbia, and their feeling of safety there is probably much greater," Ellis said.

Ellis suggested students learn the locations of the more than 100 campus callboxes.

"Callboxes provide a great deal of personal comfort, in that if you familiarize yourself with their locations, help is within two minutes," Ellis said.

Campus police still recommend securing bikes with U-locks, Ellis said, even though some versions can be opened with a pen. Ellis said someone with wire cutters could more quickly steal a bike secured with a chain and padlock.

"People could be as close as 15 feet away and not realize what's going on," Ellis said.

Skot Garrick, public information officer for the Columbia Police Department, stressed property protection inside dorms as well as outside.

"Keep your door locked," Garrick said. "Try to be aware who

lives in your hall, and if you see someone you're not familiar with, call campus police."

Garrick said auto break-ins are crimes of opportunity, and suggested students put valuables such as cell phones, cell-phone chargers, CDs, cameras and laptop computers in the trunk. He called such break-ins "one of numerous preventable crimes." He also stressed watching one's vehicle during move-in.

Ellis said Student Government had done its part for car safety during the summer, funding camera expansion in the Blossom Street Garage.

Garrick also discouraged underage drinking.

"Some officers are marked, some officers are undercover," Garrick said. "The bars work in conjunction with us because they can be fined heavily for providing alcohol to underage drinkers."

For USC crime statistics and safety tips, go to www.les.sc.edu, where police also post campus alerts.

For immediate assistance from Columbia police, call 252-2911. For more information, call 545-3500 or go to www.columbiasc.net/cofc_pd.html. Garrick said the police department would be getting a Web site under its own domain in the fall.

Ellis said safety extends beyond school.

"We're very much of the opinion that when you come to the university ... we want you to take away lifelong ideas of safety," Ellis said.

"We want people who are coming to Columbia for the first time to enjoy life as a student at the University of South Carolina," Garrick said, "... but that calls for a level of commitment on their part as well as to be aware and just to be diligent."

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecocknews@gum.sc.edu



JESSICA ANN NIELSEN/THE GAMECOCK

USC has more than 100 callboxes. Campus and city police suggest students know their surroundings and be vigilant.

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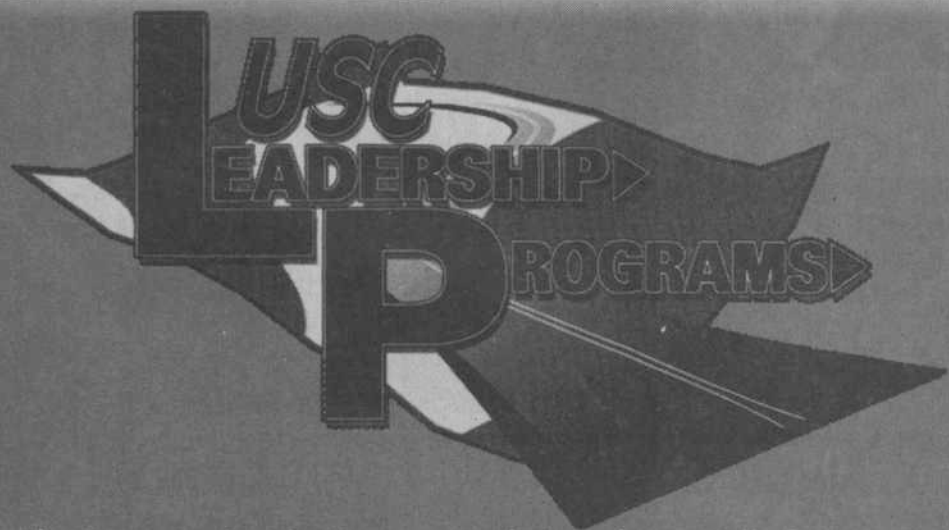
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- 1 Drying Rack
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- 1 Cylinder Hamper

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- 1 Storage Set
- 1 CD or DVD Tower
- 1 Set of 4 Bed Risers
- 1 Folding Book Case
- 1 Shoe Rack
- 1 Storage Cart
- Hangers
- Mesh Cubes
- 3-6 Milk Crates
- Duffel Bag
- Space Bags

Cram Time

- 1 Bulletin Board
- 1 Desk Lamp
- 1 Floor Lamp
- 1 Desk Organizer Set
- 1 Bed Rest

- 1 Lap Desk
- 1 Room Chair
- Moshi

Chow Down

- 4 Bowls, Plates, Mugs
- 1 Bottle/Can Opener
- 1 Water Filter Pitcher
- 1 Dorm-Size Microwave
- 1 Dorm-Size Refrigerator
- 1 Blender
- 1 George Foreman Grill
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