

UCCS POLICE THWART BICYCLE THIEVES, PROVIDE THEFT PREVENTION TIPS

By Philip Denman from [Communique](#)

Following a string of bike thefts that plagued campus during the summer session, the UCCS Police Department recently arrested two suspects and recovered a number of bikes thanks to old fashioned detective work.

According to the department, seven bikes were stolen from campus between July 7 and 16. "The trend appeared pretty quickly. We had two bikes stolen within two hours, so our first step was to send [a campus wide email giving people a heads up](#)," Officer Jerod Heidrick said. "Our next step was starting to dig around and hit up pawn shops, which are the go-to places to get rid of stolen goods."

According to Detective Martin Toetz, most thieves steal bikes to either pawn, trade or sell for scrap metal.

"Most of the time it's drug related and extremely hard to keep track of," Toetz said. "Scrap yards don't keep great records, and a lot of times they just don't care. Luckily, pawnshops are required to keep a detailed inventory. Anything pawned at a pawn shop in the city gets reported to the Colorado Springs Police Department. If you lie on those documents, it's a felony." It was one such lie that enabled the UCCS Police Department to obtain a search warrant that led to the suspects' arrest.

"In this case, the individual who stole the bike went to a pawnshop and pawned it, claiming to have owned it for six months," Toetz said. "[Officer Heidrick] was then able to recover the stolen bike, which makes the pawnshop a victim as well because they gave money for that bike." Using the name and contact information left with the pawnshop, as well as surveillance footage, Toetz and Heidrick were able to track the suspects to a hotel off North Nevada Ave. Upon serving the search warrant and entering the room, the officers found a third bike believed to be stolen.

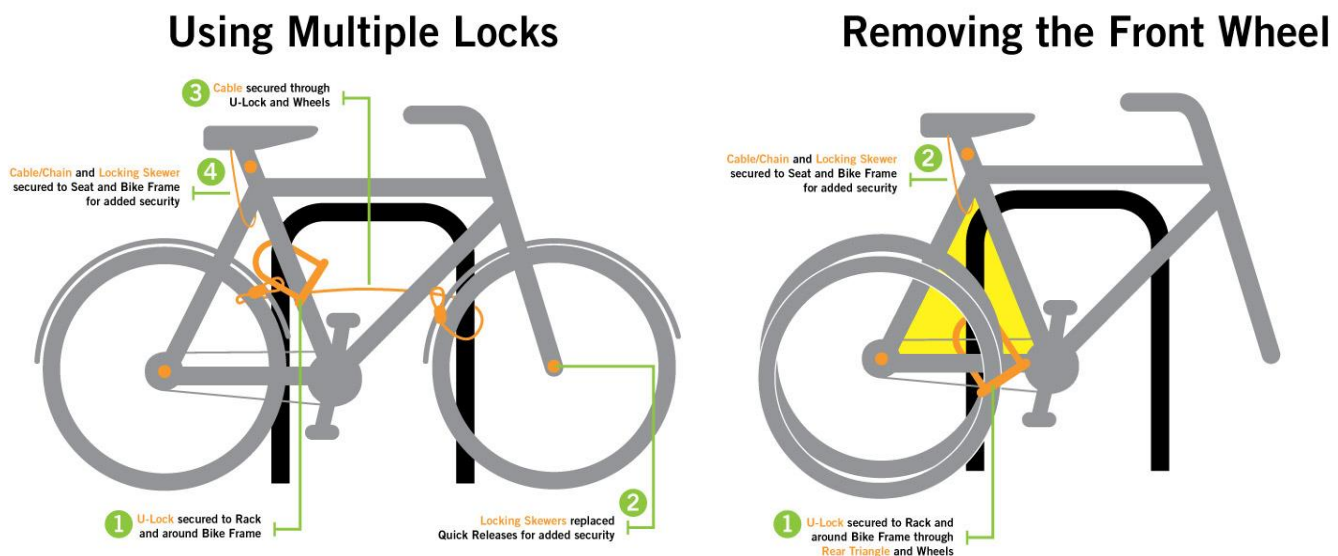
"Based on this information, we had evidence for falsifying information to a pawn broker, two or three felony thefts, two conspiracy charges and several misdemeanors," Heidrick said. According to Toetz, the suspects have no connection to the university. While four of the seven bikes were successfully recovered and returned to their owners, Toetz believes the successful arrest serves another purpose.

"What we did here wasn't just 'catch the bad guys,' and to get the property back to the people that own it," Toetz said. "We wanted to send a message to others that we're not going to just sit here and take this. These are students and they're our responsibility. "

According to Heidrick and Toetz, crimes of opportunity will become more common as UCCS grows. In an effort to prevent thefts, they provided the following list of tips to keep property secure.

Bike theft prevention tips

- **Always lock your bike.** Most thefts on campus are crimes of opportunity. Anytime you leave a valuable item unattended, whether at a desk in the library or at a bike rack, there is a significantly higher risk of it being stolen.
- **Use a u-lock to properly secure your bike.** "While any lock is better than no lock, u-locks are the only way to really keep a bike secure," Heidrick said
- **Take photos of your bike and any identifying features.** Photos that show the bike's style, size, color and identifying features like serial numbers, stickers and scratches help officers identify stolen materials.
- **Be aware of your surroundings and plan ahead.** "If you're going to put your bike outside, you can't just leave it there for three months unattended and assume nothing will happen. If you're going to be gone for a long time, put your bike in your room or take it with you because the longer its left unattended the more likely it is that something will happen," Toetz said.
- **Register your bike with the UCCS Department of Public Safety.** DPS offers free bicycle registration for all students, staff, and faculty. With registration, you will receive a registration sticker to be placed on your bike. This sticker will help deter thieves, and the registration will give more information to law enforcement to help recover you bike.
- **Be alert and report any suspicious activities.** The University Police Dispatch Center can be reached at 719-255-3111. Campus members can also make an anonymous report at the following link:<http://www.uccs.edu/pusafety/police/reportcrime.html>.



Example of proper locking technique courtesy of the [San Francisco Bicycle Coalition](http://www.sfbikecoalition.org/).