

Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association
June Column: "Bike Safety"

Enjoy this month's column and happy cycling! Watch for July's column on vacation safety tips.

How To Avoid Bicycle Theft

This month our contribution was prepared Sarah Moore, Online Content and Community Specialist with Specialized Canada.

At the time of receiving this submission, I was doing some work in London, England and was very impressed how many people now commute by bicycles in the heart of London. Even 5-10 years ago when I'd come over, you'd be lucky if you saw a handful of riders and now whether going to work or returning home at the end of the day, you can witness a steady stream of cyclists. The point is that like in the England, cycling has become a popular recreational and preferred option for commuting to work or school for many Canadians.

According to official source, bicycle theft in Canada is a multi-million dollars business. For example, according to a 2013 report from Vancouver, an estimated 2000+ bikes were stolen that year.

However, with the increase number of bicycles comes the increased risk bike theft. Aside from the growing number of bikes, the price tag for bikes can range from a reasonably affordable cost to price tags that rival some small compact cars. Therefore, we thought a crime prevention article that focuses on bicycle theft would be timely for our pending summer.

"Bike Thief" is a short video by filmmaker Casey Neistat, where he shows how easy it is to steal a bike in New York City. He removes his own bike from the locks he has put on it repeatedly, at first covertly and then using everything from a crowbar to power tools, without the police or onlookers intervening. Viewers will be astounded at how easy it was to get away with the crime.

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000001423494/bike-thief.html>

Not only is it easy to steal bikes from open spaces but we've heard a lot of reports of theft in hallways, and outside spaces of apartments where owners thought they didn't need to lock up their bikes. Do not assume anything.

Due to the strength and portability of power tools these days, we can make no guarantees for bikes left out on the streets, and especially for long periods of time. Your best bet is due diligence, make thieves think you've done a good effort in locking and hopefully they will move on to another bike who didn't take our advice.

But, here are some basic tips to help make your bike as secure as possible. Starting off with a good lock is your best line of defense. We call these primary locks.

How to lock a bike:

1. Use primary locks to secure wheel and frame to a permanent structure, such as a street-sign post or designated bicycle rack. Make sure the chain goes through the frame. You would be surprised how often this is overlooked.
2. Use a secondary lock on the opposite wheel. Remember, back wheels are more expensive than front due to the gear(s).
3. To eliminate transporting heavy chains, some cyclists rely on u-locks for their convenience. Use two of them, one for the frame and front wheel to a pole and a second for the back wheel. For maximum security, add a cable lock through the frame and both u-locks, total weight will still be less than a chain-lock. Be aware of the size of the U, a mini won't fit around one wheel the frame and a standard street sign post.
4. Seat posts and seats are often stolen. Take them in or lock them with a cable. Some cyclists use a bicycle chain and permanently attach it through the seat to the frame. Wrap them in a 700c inner tube or have your local bike shop install it.
5. Take in everything you don't want to lose. Lights, water bottles and clip on fenders are easy targets.
6. Do not assume bikes are secure if you're just running in somewhere for a minute. Thieves pray upon this behaviour.

Where to lock a bike:

1. Make sure street signs and bike racks are permanently installed. Often they can become loose in their mooring and bikes can be slipped off. Also make sure street poles have signs attached at the top for the same reason.
2. Avoid close proximity to movie theatres and college campuses because thieves assume you will be gone for a while and therefore will have time to work on your bike.
3. Avoid locking to scaffolding. Crossbeams can easily be removed with a standard wrench.
4. Avoid locking to private property such as MTA subway railing and brass poles of doorman buildings.
5. Seek out areas that have a lot of foot traffic and are in close proximity to other bikes.

How to carry locks:

1. We don't recommend carrying chain locks on your person because they can be dangerous in the event of a collision. If you want to wear chains, carry them around

your waist instead of slung over your head and shoulder like a messenger bag. Keep a spare key in a safe place. Otherwise carry locks in bags, affixed to the bike itself, on bike racks or in front baskets.

2. U-locks can be carried in back pockets, under belts or in special hip holsters.

Basically, if you truly love your ride and could not bear the thought of losing it, take it inside as much as possible and try and frequent establishments that allow you to bring your bike with you.

Finally, another fairly recent crime prevention initiative that you can take advantage of is the first national bike registry where you can register your bikes serial number: www.BikeRegistryCanada.com and CAA has just launched their new Bike Assistance program designed to help ensure that your bike can receive the basic support it needs to remain roadworthy – see http://ama.ab.ca/knowledge-base/articles/bike-assist/?WT.mc_id=10366.