

Students can S.T.O.P. laptop theft with campus program

By Morgan Marx
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It could happen any time, any day.

The second floor of the Matador Bookstore Complex was quiet. A few summer semester students were gathered, talking with friends. Jennifer Jimenez, a freshman, psychology major, placed her lunch and book bag at a table. She then walked away, across the room, to grab some paper towels from the bathroom.

Her laptop sat on the table, unattended and unlocked.

"Sometimes I worry about my possessions," said Jimenez, 18. "That's why I ran back to my table."

Campus theft is a problem in schools nationwide. Electronic devices such as laptop computers, MP3 players and other portable devices are popular targets for theft, according to CSUN's Department of Police Services.

According to the 2008 Clery Campus Crime Statistics Report, 139 incidents of burglary and 690 incidents of theft were reported at CSUN between 2006 and 2008. To fight such numbers, CSUN adopted the S.T.O.P. program (Security Tracking of Office Property) in 2006, said Christina Villalobos, Public Information Officer for the Department of Police Services.

"The purpose of S.T.O.P. is twofold," Villalobos said. "One, to decrease the chance of someone becoming a victim of theft and two, to help recover stolen property."

In the S.T.O.P. program, a metal security tag is affixed to a person's electronic device. The tag bears a unique bar code that is registered with the Department of Police Services. If the tag is tampered with or removed, a chemically bonded mark reading "Stolen Property" will be left on the device along with a telephone number to call to report a crime.

"The reason people steal laptops is not to use them, but to make money," Villalobos said. "It's hard to resell a laptop that has been tampered with."

The program costs a one-time fee of \$10 and is available for both state and personal property. It is open to CSUN students and faculty, as well as family and other members of the community, Villalobos said. Property is protected for the lifetime of the device, even after graduation. The tracking information is kept in a national database, so if a device is lost in transit nationwide, there is a good chance it will be recovered, Villalobos said.

Upgrades, including a lock and carrying case, can be purchased through the S.T.O.P. website and additional computer security devices are sold at the Matador Bookstore.

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