Exit Alarm Locks Causing Confusion

BY FRANK DELOACH

Confusion about the purpose of emergency exit alarm locks installed recently in men's dorms has triggered violent reactions by some students.

Students have damaged 20 of the 30 locks installed by the housing service. Repair costs are estimated between $250 and $300, said Robert A. Stewart, director of housing services. Each lock cost $80, and Stewart said the locks would be repaired only when housing thought students really understood and accepted the reason for the locks.

"The reasoning students are reacting like this is that they don't understand the real purpose behind the locks," said Al Menard, residence life area coordinator for Men's Towers. "We're not out to trap people violating open house rules. Neither are we trying to restrict their freedom. The locks are there to control thefts in the dorms.

"By controlling the dorm exits we can keep an eye on people coming in and out. There are pros and cons to every issue. I don't think it will increase the number of open house violations, but it will reduce the number of thefts. Everybody wants the university to do something about thefts and this is one way we are," Menard said.

"Students who haven't had anything stolen are the ones mad about the locks. Any of the people who got ripped off would agree to having the locks," Menard said.

According to Trey Lott, Preston hall assistant, students are angered because they weren't consulted about use of the locks or warned before installation. "The people on this hall want them removed. They argue that since the locks were installed to protect them, they should have a chance to voice an opinion. They want residence life to prove to them that thefts are numerous enough to warrant the locks," Lott said. "I don't believe in the vandalism going on but I sympathize with the students point of view," Lott said.

The problem is that students voted two years ago to have the locks installed. They wanted the locks then," Jim Hinkle, Preston president, said. "But housing hasn't installed them until now. I was just a freshman then, and a lot of guys here didn't have anything to do with the decision. They're not in favor of locks now. They say they aren't getting ripped off and they don't want the problem."

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Mike Rabasca, assistant dean of residence life, said, "We had hoped that student governments would be involved in deciding to have the locks installed. In addition, we sent a letter to each student advising him of the installation and purpose of the safety locks. We really don't have a plan right now. We want student governments to begin again."

"I've already met with students expressing their opinions and with student government members. I still don't think the students can see the purpose of the locks because it's not really a personal problem to most of them yet. We need to rehash the whole idea," Rabasca said.

"This city is growing up and there is a theft problem," Menard said. By the end of November there were already 15 thefts reported. That accounts for only the people who took the time to call us and report the thefts. Some of the metropolitan campuses these locks are working 24 hours per day. The students would be angry if the locks were removed."

Aware is having an organizational meeting Thursday at 8:00 P.M. in room 307 at the Russell House. Everyone is urged to come.

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