



**CONCLUDED
PROBLEM REPORT
PS-1**

Problem ID : 53

Reporting Division : SOUTH

District:

Neighbourhood : OLD STRATHCONA EAST

Address :

Reg	Rank	Last Name	First Name
1598	CST	KELLER	ED

Key Description : MOUNTAIN BIKE THEFTS

Problem Description :

An analysis of property crime statistics in East Strathcona NFP during spring 1994 indicated that the majority of the loss was incurred through bicycle thefts. In particular, high end mountain Dikes valued between \$800 to \$3,000 were being targeted. In one case, a break and enter to a bicycle store where four bikes were stolen resulted in a \$15,000 loss.

ANALYSIS: Since the problem dealt with expensive mountain bikes, I had to find out what type of person would pay up to and over \$800 for a bicycle. I found that in most cases, they were mountain bike enthusiasts. This group differs from the recreational and road cyclist. This subculture would meet informally at bicycle shops that specialize in mountain bikes. They enjoy interaction with other riders almost as much as the ride itself. You could find this group at weekly races in Terwilligar Park. The riders would take note of the make and model of other mountain bikes that they encounter during their rides. Any solution would have to make use of this informal network.

Most bicycles in these categories would be serviced at least once a year. This would take place at selected shops that specialize in mountain bikes.

The bicycle stores that were the hardest hit were also the ones with the worst security practices. It was common practice to allow a prospective buyer to test ride a \$2,000 mountain bike unaccompanied with a set of keys left behind for collateral. These stores were also the most insecure after closing time, making them vulnerable to break-in's. Most bicycle owners in this category could tell you everything about their bike except for the serial number.

The problem was clearly multi-dimensional. We had to address the lack of security in the stores, educating bicycle owners as to the importance of the serial number, and methods to disseminate information dealing with stolen mountain bikes to the bicycle subculture. The most realistic hope was to reduce the number of thefts within this category of bicycles.

Problem solving strategies and results :

To address the lack of security within the stores, I met with management from each store. A plan was developed in which several pieces of identification would have to be produced before a customer could remove a bike for a test ride. In the case of the very expensive mountain bikes, the customer would be joined by a staff member.

These stores were encouraged to install bars over their windows, upgrade exterior doors and locks and install an audible alarm. We also suggested that they leave the interior lights on while the store is closed.

Constable CAMP, also from Old Strathcona Beat, dealt with the challenge to educate bicycle owners as to the importance of recording the bicycle serial number issue. He took advantage of the fact that the bicycles are brought in annually to be serviced. His efforts are recorded on a separate Problem Solving Report, assignment PS #49, submitted in February 1995.

To facilitate information sharing, this writer developed a "hot sheet". This is a list of stolen mountain bikes belonging to my target group. The information was compiled as the bicycles were reported stolen at the community station in my beat area. Fax numbers from local bike shops, bicycle groups, outdoor supply stores, custom frame shops and anywhere else the riders would congregate were programmed into the station's fax machine. The hot sheets were sent out regularly along with any information dealing with possible suspects involved in bicycle thefts. During follow-up visits,

I ensured the list were posted. As the program took effect, information had to be sent out dealing with the prescribed action in the event a stolen bicycle is spotted.

ASSESSMENT: After the above action was taken, there were only two cases of bicycle thefts during the course of a test ride. On the first occasion, an inexpensive mountain bike was stolen. The suspect left void identification. As a result, the bicycle was recovered and the suspect was charged. The second incident involved an employee who did not adhere to my recommendations. Thus, the culprit was successful in his attempt to steal the bike. Considering the thousands of customers served and the hundreds of sales processed by the four bicycle stores in my beat, this was a noticeable decrease.

There was only one break and enter to a bicycle store following these efforts. This occurred when a suspect entered via a window that the store owner decided not to secure with bars. Ironically, this owner was the most difficult to convince when I initially spoke to him regarding the vulnerability of his store after closing. The other three stores secured their premises and had no break-in's.

The hot sheets were very well received by all bicycle user groups. During the course of my duties, I regularly spoke with cyclists who explained that they had viewed the lists and were now looking for these bikes.

The stolen bike was recovered as a suspect rode by the front of the Hardcore Mountain Bike Store. The staff recognized the bike from its description. They took the suspect into custody and delivered him and the bike to the police.

Another stolen bike was noticed by a cyclist at his workplace. As a result, the bike was recovered and the suspect was charged.

The most expensive bicycle on the list was a one of a kind \$6,500 mountain bike. After viewing the hot sheet, a cyclist spotted it in Calgary and was being driven by a courier. The information was sent to the Calgary Police Department who are now looking for the bike.

A valuable byproduct of this program was a building of faith within the mountain bike subculture. They appreciated the effort being put into addressing one of their many concerns. They also appreciated the information sharing through the hot sheet

This program does require effort by the police service to continue. A constant reminder has to be made to ensure front counter personnel at community stations include necessary details when taking complaints of bicycle theft. Biweekly hot sheets have to be typed and distributed. And a special effort has to be made every spring to ensure the user groups begin the new season with the practices that they learned the prior year.