

Right at Home: Tips for staying safe at college

KIM COOK Associated Press

The annual college shopping trip is almost upon us. And while it's fun to stock up on posters, shower caddies and desk lamps, experts say you also should consider how you'll keep yourself, and your stuff, safe on campus.

Common sense is the best defense, says Chris McGoey, who runs a security business in Los Angeles and consults on campus safety.

"It's all about access. In most incidents, victims were careless, unaware and too trusting," he says.

In dorm suites and hallways, there may be visitors you don't know. Many freshmen like to adopt an "open-door" policy when they get moved into dorms. But that's an invitation to would-be thieves.

"If you have a computer, laptop or other electronic equipment, tether it to something solid using a security cable," advise the "college life" editors at the school-advice site SparkNotes.com.

There are also motion-sensor locks for laptops. And Orbicule's Undercover is a monitoring device for your Mac, iPhone or iPad; for a student price of \$39, the downloadable software will snap a photo of the person who took your Mac and track the IP address anywhere in the world — information that can be given to police. In the meantime, lockout features prevent the thief from accessing anything on the computer.

As for smaller valuables, some students suggest keeping them in a trunk — the kind you take to summer camp — with a combination lock. Trunks also make handy nightstands.

Jeff Gawronski of DormCo.com, an online retailer that sells dorm security items, says his biggest seller is a room safe. Safes these days have been scaled down to look less intimidating in a dorm room.

Diversion safes are containers that look like everyday items — cleanser cans, for example. The idea's clever, so long as nobody accidentally throws the safe out.

If your roommate has lost a key, don't leave the door unlocked. Instead offer to help find the resident assistant to get a new lock and keys.

In general, familiarize yourself with the school's security systems and dorm environment. Locate fire extinguishers, and keep a small one on hand if you have appliances.

Right at Home: Tips for staying safe at college

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

DormCo.com stocks a Kevlar fire blanket to smother flames.

Female students may feel safer at night with a small pepper spray canister, if the school allows it. CollegeStudentSafety.com even sells jogging hand weights with a small vial hidden in the grip. A lighted keychain with an alarm may offer peace of mind.

Students are at particular risk for identity theft, according to a survey by Impulse Research for the Chubb Group Insurance Cos. Some simple steps can reduce the risk:

Don't give out bank, credit card or social security information over the phone or online. Shred sensitive documents, or use an identity blocker stamp that obscures personal info. Be careful about replying to solicitations, and check bank balances frequently. If your wallet or purse is stolen, let your bank, the school and the police know immediately.

If you do suspect identity theft, go to Onguardonline.gov for help. It has information from the federal government and the tech industry on how to safeguard identity online.

"Parents can't assume their son/daughter knows not to readily give out their personal information," says Gawronski. "This should be a discussion for all parents to have with their children before they head off to college."

—
Sourcebook:

www.sparknotes.com

www.dormco.com - Go Vault dorm safe, \$19.99; Laptop Defender, \$28.89; Pepper Spray, \$8.33; KYSS Locking Safe Bag, \$39.98; Shredder Scissors, \$6.91; Kevlar Fire Blanket, \$49.99.

www.collegestudentsafety.com - campus crime stats, safety tips and advice, as well as security items. Starter Kit includes first aid kit, door alarm and candle diversion safe, \$49.99; College Safety Bundle includes Dorm Vault laptop safe, first aid kit and Big Jammer door bar, \$129.99; Keychain alarm, \$12.99; CounterStrike jogging weights, \$15.99, or two for \$28.99.

www.orbicule.com - security software for Apple products. Special student rate \$39.99 with upgrades available.

www.onguardonline.gov

Source URL (retrieved on 04/17/2014 - 6:05am):

Right at Home: Tips for staying safe at college

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

<http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2010/07/right-home-tips-staying-safe-college>