

Bike Theft Prevention

Presented by the Santa Cruz Bicycle Industry Coalition and Bike to Work

Addressing the new U-lock problem and general anti-theft measures

Unfortunately, bike theft in Santa Cruz County is a widespread problem but simple preventive measures can reduce the risk of having your bike swiped. Bikes are stolen from the streets in business, residential, and school areas as well as from people's homes, garages, backyards and school grounds. Based on rough calculations about a bike a day is stolen in Santa Cruz County. Cyclists must take precautions when leaving their bikes out of their constant sight. The following is advice on combating the current U-lock issue followed by more general bike theft prevention information.

The current U-lock problem occurs in some Kryptonite and other brands models using a round key.

Solutions:

A **flat key** and **combo U-lock** cannot be open in this "new" method. Kryptonite and other brands make a reliable and strong combo U-lock and I would recommend going to a bicycle shop to purchase your lock. You might be able to find less expensive combo or flat key U-lock at a Kmart/Target/Longs type of store but they will not be as good as the one's in the bike shop. Santa Cruz County has many fine bike shops where the sales people are knowledgeable bike riders who can address your concerns about preventing your bike from being stolen.

The combination lock removes the hassle of remembering and carrying around a key, but you must remember to switch combo numbers otherwise someone can open your lock. Most shops in Santa Cruz County sell this lock though they maybe running in short supply due to the breadth of this current issue. Some bike shops are stocking their shelves with Master Locks, which appear to be immune from this problem.

If you have a Kryptonite U-lock go to the Kryptonite website: www.kryptonitelock.com for updates on their soon to be released upgrade kit for this current issue. According to their website they will be offering this upgrade free to high-end locks purchased after September, 2002. Visit their site for complete information. The current U-lock issue should be a temporary problem which bike lock companies like Kryptonite will fix for the long term.

General bike thief prevention measures:

- Always lock your bike when left outside, even if you are going to run into a store for only a few seconds.
- Lock your bike to a non-moveable structure.
- Use a combo or flat key U-lock. Most cable locks can easily be cut.
- Lock your bike in a high visible/high traffic area. Thieves prefer secluded areas.
- Make sure to put your lock through a closed part of your bike frame. Wheels can easily be taken off a bike.

- Lock your wheels as well as your frame. It is harder to take a back wheel off so if you can only lock one wheel, make it your front wheel.
- Bring your bike inside whenever you can.
- The City of Santa Cruz rents bike lockers and cages to people who work downtown. Call 420-5187.
- For extra security, use a U-lock and cable lock together especially to lock front and back wheels.
- The newer, the more expensive a bike the more of a target it will be. But all bikes are prone to theft.
- Avoid leaving your bike locked up on the street over night.
- When bikes are stored in garages, sheds, or backyards make sure the doors are locked and bikes are out of view from the street as much as possible.

How to increase your chances of retrieving your bike if it is stolen:

- Register your bike with your local jurisdiction, which will help to retrieve your bike if it is stolen. Also write down your bike's serial number; keep a photo of your bike; put your name and phone number stuffed in the end of the handlebars.
- Report the theft to the police ASAP. Do this for your sake and for the sake of getting the police to do more to prevent bike theft. If writing bike theft reports takes too much of their time then they'll prioritize bike theft prevention since it will be more time efficient for them.

These precautions will help you secure your bike so you can enjoy countless trips on your bike. Remember biking is the best way to travel.

For more information on biking call Piet Canin at 423-9569 (ext. 127), Santa Cruz Bicycle Industry Coalition (www.scbic.org) and Bike to Work (www.bike2work.com), or the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (<http://www.sfbike.org/?theft>).