

Why does the UCSB Police Department Impound Bicycles on Campus?

The message the UCSB Police department pushes out is consistent and the rule is simple to follow – if a bicycle is parked on campus and is not in a bike rack it is illegally parked (see video links at the end of the article). Still, as someone who worked as a CSO for 4 years, one of the most common questions that would come up was why the Department would impound bikes on campus.

Overall, the UCSB Police Department and CSO organization pride themselves on education rather than senseless enforcement. In fact, much of its educational efforts are due to the various fines and fees regarding illegally parked bicycles and skateboards. Using written articles, videos, verbal warnings, and other techniques, the police department's aim is to educate others on how to avoid the inconvenience of impounding and fines.

But still, the question has not been answered, why impound in the first place? The answer is simple. The primary concern of the police department is safety, and illegally parked bicycles pose a safety hazard.

With nearly 20,000 bicycles each day that operate on campus The UC police department regularly receives complaints from students, faculty and staff about illegally parked bicycles. Without appropriate rules and regulations, parking and day-to-day operations would be very hectic, unappealing to current and prospective students, and unsafe to say the

least. Because of this routinely expressed community concern around safe bicycle parking, coupled with the uniquely high number of bicyclists, impounding has found its place on campus as a less than ideal but necessary solution.

Furthermore, UCSB has about 1,000 students with physical disabilities limiting their vision, hearing and mobility. They rely on sidewalks, ramps, and other areas to be free of obstructions, such as illegally parked bicycles, to function with the same accessibility of their fellow gauchos. I can personally attest to this as my roommate is currently enrolled at UCSB and is blind. He heavily relies on being able to memorize the geography of the campus in order to get around. When bicycles are not in the same place every day, (aka outside of the bike racks), the task of establishing a safe route becomes increasingly more challenging and time consuming as the geography and obstacles shift daily. Therefore moving and or removing illegally parked bicycles from the campus landscape is indeed necessary.

Here are a couple more points to consider concerning bike impounding:

- UCPD's Bicycle Safety Program, including bicycle impounding, is self funded and does not come from student or university funds.



- UCSB Police officers do not spend time impounding Bikes, Community Service Officers do that. All CSO's are part time civilian employees of the police department and current UCSB students. This means that police officers are not taken away from their work.
- Some have suggested ticketing as opposed to impounding, but citations (tickets) have limitations. For example, the legal fine for an illegally parked bicycle is nearly \$200 (set by the court) and would require police officers to remain in the area for possible hours to cite the violator. Impounding allows us to remove the problem without over penalizing the violator financially, or jeopardizing the safety of the community by tying up the police officers.
- Lawfully parked bicycles (those parked in Bike racks) are less likely to be stolen. Racks are provided to reduce theft, the community's number one reported crime. During the impound process stolen bicycles are frequently recovered and returned to their original owners. (The police department runs the license of every impounded bike to see if it has been reported stolen.)
- The police department knows that in certain situations exceptions can occur, which is why the fee to release an illegally parked bike can be appealed.



Additionally, the UCSB Police Department actively works with AS BIKES, an on-campus organization that helps address students' bicycle needs, so they can continue to stay on top of community issues and service our community to the best of their ability. In fact, UCPD encourages students to contact AS BIKES if they have suggestions and recommendations on how to improve bicycle parking.

I hope this helped clear up the issue of bike impounding and gives you greater peace of mind knowing the reasons behind it. Be sure to check out the hilarious yet informational YouTube videos below, made by yours truly. Have fun and ride safe, Gauchos!

About the Author: Ariel Toussaint Bournes is the current Public Relations Specialist with the UCSB Police Department. He's a class of 2012 UCSB Alum, an avid artist and skateboarder, and really into all things Internet.

More questions? Email The UCSB Police department at QA@police.ucsb.edu

Related Video Links:

UCSB "Bike Controversy":

<http://youtu.be/Sr26qgUQ22w>

UCSB' "Can't Take That Ride":

<http://youtu.be/X8GoR08W2nM>