

## Bike thefts a regular summertime problem

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Jake Delaney, 13, rode his bicycle up to the Mower County Fair bike racks just after noon Friday. He got off his red bike, leaned it up against the chain-link fence at one end of the rack and then walked into the fair.

What was the difference between his bike and the 10 others at the racks? His wasn't locked up.

He said he was not concerned about his bike potentially being stolen. But Austin Police say it's a summertime concern, and often at fair time.

Bike thefts in Austin have been a problem all summer. According to Austin Police Captain Dave McKichan, they're seeing reports of one or two stolen bikes a day.

"It seems to be a little more than we normally see," McKichan said. "The biggest single factor in most of them are that the bikes are not being locked up."

Eleven-year-olds Colin Wilson and Tyler Robertson understand that point. The pair had securely locked their bikes before entering the fairgrounds. They said they ride their bikes around town quite a bit and lock them up "all the time."

Would the boys ever consider leaving a bike unlocked going into the fair, or other places?

"Never," Wilson said. "That's just stupid."

It also helps to have reminders before you leave the house, too.

"My mom always tells me, 'lock up your bike,'" Robertson said.

Locking them up is the key. Many times, it's a theft of convenience, McKichan said. So if four bikes are at a rack, and three are locked, the thief is going to take is the unlocked bike, he said.

Fair week is always a time to be extra careful with bikes. Like the public pool and library during the summer, the fair is a hot spot for thefts. McKichan attributes this to large groups of people coming together at one time, younger people, in particular. And with the younger age can sometimes be kids who aren't locking their bikes.