

Thieves steal four bikes from correctional clients at Hilltop House

Nighttime video captures incident

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Four criminal offenders became victims of crime last week when their bikes were stolen from Hilltop House Community Corrections in Durango.



Courtesy of Hilltop House

Four suspects are caught on video early in the morning of July 5 stealing bicycles at Hilltop House. To watch the full video, visit archive.durangoherald.com.

A security camera with night vision recorded the incident at 3:56 a.m. July 5.

The footage shows four men approach a bike rack, select four unlocked bikes, and ride away.

One thief removed his shirt during the crime, revealing a tattoo on his right arm. Another put his finger to his lips, as if to hush his partners in crime.

One suspect rode a stolen bike to the crime scene and swapped it for a bike in the rack, said John Schmier, director of Hilltop.

"The first thing we thought was that the clients whose bikes (were stolen) had given permission to these guys, but that wasn't the case," Schmier said. "Essentially, they shopped and took the best four (bikes)."

Hilltop is a halfway house on Avenida del Sol that allows criminal offenders to live and work in the community rather than serve time behind bars. It is a tiered program whereby prisoners gradually earn more freedoms.

Many Hilltop clients don't have cars and rely on bikes to get to work, Schmier said.

"The clients up there, they made a mistake, but they shouldn't be taken advantage of," he said.

It is possible that some of the bike thieves are former clients at Hilltop, Schmier said. However, Hilltop staff has not been able to identify any of the suspects.

In a way, it was beneficial to clients to become the victim of a crime, Schmier said. "To be on the receiving end of that, it's kind of victim impact," he said.

Hilltop positioned a camera on the bike rack to help ensure clients don't bring illegal contraband onto the property.