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## NSU bicycle patrol takes shape; officers participate in on-campus patrol course

(Tahlequah, OK) --As part of a campus-wide effort to promote green initiatives and good health among students and employees, officers with the Northeastern State University Department of Public Safety and Campus Police are participating in a four-day class to prepare for implementation of bicycle patrols.

The class is being held June 6-9 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. in the University Center Dogwood Room and outdoors. The training follows a curriculum established by the International Police Mountain Bike Association.

"We want to install a dedicated bike patrol for use during peak times and in the evenings," said NSU DPS Chief Patti Buhl. "We would like to have one officer in a vehicle and one on bicycle after hours. We also want to use bicycles during special events such as football games."

Seven officers are participating: William Metcalfe, James Flores, Chase Anderson, Joe Roberts, Manuel Holland, James Mynatt and Capt. James Bell. Instructor is Officer Jay Littlejohn of the University of Oklahoma Police Department.

"An officer on bicycle can still work an accident or check for DUI," Littlejohn said. "Maybe you can't transport prisoners, but you can do just about everything else. Plus bicycles allow more face-to-face contact with the public and displays the friendlier aspects of law enforcement."

Bell echoed Littlejohn's sentiments on the law enforcement advantages and public interaction brought by biking.

"The bicycle is better suited to the campus environment," he said. "You can go places the patrol cars can't. You can patrol parking lots without getting in the way of traffic. Bicycles are also stealthier, which can allow us to catch more crimes in progress. But what I like best is getting out and meeting people. I was on a bike at the Red Fern Festival and people would come up and talk to me. That just doesn't happen if you're sitting in a car."

The course includes instruction and bike rides addressing topics such as basic nutrition and physical fitness, bicycle maintenance, proper clothing and equipment, riding at night, riding skills and training scenarios dealing with matters as serious as a burglary in progress or as routine as a traffic stop.

With officers spending part of their patrol time on bicycles, the campus police can support NSU policies seeking sustainability practices and a healthy campus environment.

"Bike patrols support green and health initiatives in a number of ways," Buhl said. "Riding bikes will help our officers stay fit. They don't need to set time aside for the workouts – they exercise while working. And with fewer cars on patrol, it will reduce our gasoline consumption."

Buhl said bicycle use was something the NSU DPS has considered for some time.

"We've wanted to start this, but we've lacked the manpower or equipment to do it," she said. "We've now received funding to purchase bicycles and repair our old ones. Everything is meshing now so we can accomplish this."

Once the patrols are in place on the Tahlequah campus, Buhl also would like to see them on the other NSU campuses.



Northeastern State University campus police officer Joe Roberts negotiates obstacles during a four-day bike patrol course held at the Tahlequah campus.

"As our student body and police department grows, we would like to have bike patrols at Broken Arrow and Muskogee," she said. "Our BA campus already has an older bicycle. Our long term goal is to eventually replace the older bikes with new ones and expand."

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