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Bicycle Patrol Good for Patrolling, Environment and Good Will

Jul-02-2009



Shown, from left to right, are Keith Cox, general manager, Bike and Hike; Officer Brian Shull; Dan Nadler, vice president for student affairs; UPD Chief Adam Due; Officer Ryan Risinger; and Officer Rodney Mitchell.

to better serve and protect everyone on campus."

Keith Cox, general manager of Bike and Hike in Charleston, described some of the features of the new patrol units. "They have a lightweight aluminum frame, disk brakes for better riding in all conditions and a suspension front end. It's faster than a normal mountain bike."

Another feature of this bike makes it especially useful in law enforcement. "It has a silent clutch, which means there is no noise or clicking when you cruise," said Cox. This will allow the officers to travel very quickly, yet quietly.

Nadler, Cox and university police officers recently rode the new bikes to campus, testing their speed as they rode in the rain from the dealership to UPD headquarters. Some special equipment, such as oscillating red and blue lights, will need to be installed to make the bicycles completely ready for campus use.

Ten officers on Eastern's police force have completed the 32-hour training course designed to teach specialized maneuvers for bicycle patrols. Included, for example, are the skills needed for moving among crowds and obstacles.

Members of the UPD force who participate on the unit are happy for the opportunity.

"It gets us out there where we're more approachable," one officer said, noting that students who see her on the bicycle are more likely to let their guards down and strike up a friendly conversation.

And, she added, the bikes are real fuel savers. "It saves all that gas that gets burned with regular (car) patrols."

A police officer may want something with a little more horsepower in event of a high-speed, multi-mile chase, but for patrolling a small east-central Illinois university campus?

Bicycles do quite well, thank you.

They're quick and they're quiet. They're good for the environment. And they're a good public relations tool for the department.

That's why Dan Nadler, vice president for student affairs, thought it important to give Eastern Illinois University's Bicycle Patrol a makeover. Officers of the unit will be patrolling campus on six new Cannondale law enforcement bikes, an upgrade deemed necessary by Nadler and EIU Police Chief Adam Due.

Nadler noted that some of the replaced bikes were as old as the unit itself. The Bicycle Patrol Unit was created in 1995, allowing officers to respond to calls in areas not easily accessed by vehicles but too large for foot patrols, such as the Quad areas and practice fields.

"Some of the older bikes are approximately 13 years old," Nadler said. "New bikes will allow our officers