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Campus Safety: Do You Know How To Avoid A Dangerous Situation?

This fall thousands of students will leave their families and friends to attend college. For many, it will be their first time away from home and also their first experience with total independence. It's an exciting time and a dangerous one. Concerned with this safety issue, Sheriff Cahoon of Hyde County urges college students to exercise caution when living on campus.

Across the United States college campuses are increasing security measures by installing emergency call box systems designed to immediately contact a 911 operator. They are usually located in frequently traveled areas such as parking lots and main routes used to and from class. Another popular security measure involves campus escorts. This program recruits qualified volunteers to walk students to and from class after dark. Security cameras and bright lighting are also being used to heighten campus safety.

"College campuses are extremely vulnerable to crime because of their openness," said Sheriff Cahoon. "It's difficult to keep buildings and dorm rooms locked because people are constantly coming and going. Another contributing factor is that students tend to develop a false sense of security because of the seemingly peaceful surroundings."

Campus crimes can take many forms - theft, date rape, and drugs to name just a few. It's impossible to avoid all dangers. However, Sheriff Cahoon has some suggestions on how college students can better protect and educate themselves through campus safety education.

- Never post information as to your whereabouts on your dorm room door, or on social media. If an intruder knows that you are away - it's an open invitation for them to break in.
- Even if leaving your room for only a few minutes - lock your door.
- When studying in out-of-the way places, inform campus security as to your whereabouts.

- When meeting a study partner for the first time, make arrangements to meet in a public place.
- Encourage campus security to establish a photo identification program to deter outsiders from entering school buildings.
- Work with your local law enforcement to organize a safety education program to teach incoming students the do's and don'ts of campus safety.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency call box locations.
- Learn to trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, get out of it. Don't allow anyone to violate your comfort zone.

For more information contact the Hyde County Sheriffs Office at 252-926-3171.

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