

Campus loses sight of boxes

BY SHANNON CONNELL
STAFF WRITER

The effectiveness of some campus emergency boxes has been called into question after a campuswide scavenger hunt led by the women's affairs committee Thursday.

About 15 students divided up into smaller groups to scope out the locations of the blue-light emergency boxes to check each box's condition and visibility.

The groups, each equipped with a detailed map and a checklist, took up to 15 minutes in some cases to locate the boxes, said Heather Aldersey, co-chairwoman of the committee.

"A lot looked like lampposts," she said.

The hunt was motivated by concern that recent campus construction had blocked emergency boxes from view or accessibility. After the hunt, however, committee members decided that locating and identifying the boxes is at the heart of the problem.

"A lot of them weren't blue," Aldersey said. Many, she pointed out, are black, green or yellow.

Another problem the group is citing is a lack of available campus emergency boxes.

"There are not nearly enough blue lights on campus," Aldersey said.

Randy Young, spokesman for the Department of Public Safety, said close to 100 emergency boxes can be found across campus.

"Basically they offer a one-touch immediate communication with our 911 dispatch center," he said.

The location of the boxes is largely stagnant, but in light of recent campuswide construction, some blue lights will be relocated.

"We are in a constant state of assessment," Young said. "Construction may cause a lack of pedestrian traffic."

Participants of the scavenger hunt said they were surprised at how far apart some emergency boxes were from one another. Aldersey said that in some cases, they were unable to view more than one emergency box at a time.

Rapes, mugging and robberies are realities that exist on college campuses, Aldersey said. Eight forcible sex offenses were reported

to University police in 2004, according to the public safety department's Web site.

Young said an effective part of staying safe on campus is taking steps to prevent crimes before they happen.

"Stay in well-lit areas," he said. "Walk in groups. Walk the shortest distance between points."

In the mean time, women's affairs will continue to lobby for more blue lights on campus.

"We hope to have another more comprehensive scavenger hunt," Aldersey said.

The group plans to make recommendations to the Department of Public Safety — including painting the poles of the boxes a more striking color and using brighter light bulbs.

Aldersey said the group wants to conduct trial and practice runs of blue lights in the near future to check response times by emergency personnel.

"We are going to continue with this."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu

BY SETH PEAVEY
STAFF WRITER

N.C. homeowners and businesses will be spending more on their natural gas heating bills this winter than ever before.

The N.C. Utilities Commission approved another price increase of 11 percent for November, on top of a 22 percent increase last month.

"This is the highest we've ever experienced," said Jeff Davis, director of the natural gas division of the N.C. Utilities Commission.

Customers of PSNC Energy will be spending an average of \$174 this month, compared to \$112 last November, according to the company. PSNC serves about 407,000 customers in the state.

Angie Townsend, a company spokeswoman, said PSNC is experiencing its own increase in gas expenses.

"Natural gas is costing PSNC Energy more than ever before," she said. "We are allowed by state regulations to pass that cost on to consumers."

It is not certain yet whether North Carolinians will face additional rate hikes this year.

"Hopefully now we have seen the last of the requested increases for this winter," Davis said. "It depends on what happens with the weather."

"We have a classic situation of increased demand and a limit in our short-term ability to increase supply."

MICHAEL WALDEN, N.C. STATE PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS

A particularly cold winter could increase demand for natural gas and cause prices to increase even further, he said.

Highest consumption usually occurs during January and February, he said.

The N.C. Utility Commission bases its approved increases entirely upon fluctuations in the market price of natural gas. And local energy companies have not been allowed to increase their profit margin since 1998, Davis said.

The unusually high prices have been a result of the active hurricane season as well as an increased use of natural gas in the generation of electricity, he said.

"Most, if not all, of the natural gas in this region comes from the Gulf of Mexico," he said.

Much of that supply infrastructure was damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

"We have a classic situation of increased demand and a limit in our short-term ability to increase supply," said Michael Walden, an

economics professor at N.C. State University.

The increased cost of natural gas could hurt local businesses and dampen economic growth by causing customers to restrain their spending.

"If people are paying more on their heating bills, they will have less to spend," he said.

Walden, who uses natural gas to heat his home, said consumers should find alternative ways of staying warm during the winter months, such as wearing thicker clothes or weather-stripping windows.

Simply turning down the thermostat a couple of degrees also can go a long way toward saving energy.

"If your normal setting is 68 (degrees), changing it to 67 (degrees) will save you about 7 percent," Davis said. "Going to 66 (degrees) will save you about 13 percent."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

■ The Students Global AIDS Campaign will host an advocacy training at 2 p.m. today in Saunders 104 and at 6 p.m. in Saunders 220. Sessions will be led by Sara Renn, grassroots action coordinator for the national SGAC and Health-Global Access Project, and Thelma Wright of N.C. Harm Reduction Coalition. Refreshments will be provided.

■ The "We Are All Different; We Are All The Same" art exhibit opens today at the Carrboro Branch Library. The exhibit is a photographic essay on people in the community with physical disability. The library will be open between 3:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. today.

■ Students for Students International will host a "Day in the Life of an African" to raise awareness about education and living conditions in Africa. The event will involve not wearing shoes to class, not eating until dinner, drinking from one designated fountain and not using

electronic devices. There will be a feast to end the event at 5 p.m. in Polk Place.

■ Chapel Hill mayoral candidate Kevin Wolff will hold a meet-and-greet from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. today in the Pit.

■ The Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Films will present "By the Dawn's Early Light" at 7 p.m. today in the Sonja Haynes Stone Center Multipurpose Room. The documentary looks at the 1996 controversy surrounding basketball star Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf's refusal to stand for the national anthem.

■ The Hekima Reading Circle will take place at 7 p.m. at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center Library. The discussion of Essie Mae Washington-Williams' book, "Dear Senator: A Memoir by the Daughter of Strom Thurmond," is co-sponsored by the Carolina Women's Center and the Kappa Omicron Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta. The first 15 registrants will

receive a free copy of the book.

■ Marcie Cohen Ferris will lead a lecture on "Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South," at 7:30 p.m. today in the Hanes Art Center Auditorium.

■ UNC graduate Will West will perform mellow, bluesy, experimental folk music at 10 p.m. today at Fuse Lounge, 403 W. Rosemary St., for the 21-and-older crowd. There will not be a cover charge.

To make a calendar submission, visit www.dailytarheel.com for a list of submission policies and contacts. Events must be sent in by noon the preceding publication date.

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POLICE LOG

■ At 2:30 a.m. Tuesday, Stephen Robinson was arrested on charges of assault on an officer and disorderly conduct, according to Chapel Hill police reports.

He was apprehended on Henderson Street, and was sent to Orange County Jail on a secured \$150 bond, reports state. His court date is set for Nov. 5.

■ Zachary Moody was arrested at 9:39 p.m. Monday on charges of assault inflicting bodily injury, possession of drug paraphernalia and second-degree trespassing, according to Chapel Hill police reports.

Reports state that Moody punched two men. He is scheduled to appear in District Criminal Court.

■ Antonio Pettiford and Jerriek Woods both were arrested in UNC Hospitals at 7 a.m. Tuesday on charges of assault with a deadly weapon

after the two men shot one another, Chapel Hill police reports state.

The incident took place at a residence on Lindsey Street, according to reports.

■ An armed robbery with two victims was reported at 1:17 a.m. Tuesday, according to Chapel Hill police reports.

The first reported a Verizon cell phone and a Fossil stolen, and the second victim a Motorola V26 cell phone and some cash stolen, reports state.

■ Thomas Brance Falace, of 710 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., was arrested on charges of impaired driving and reckless driving at 11:28 p.m. Monday, according to Chapel Hill police reports.

According to reports, Falace, who is scheduled to appear in District Criminal Court in Hillsborough on Dec. 6, drove onto a closed street

filled with pedestrians.

When police stopped him at South Columbia Street and Cameron Avenue, he performed poorly on field tests and refused a breath test, reports state.

Falace was taken to Orange County Jail until sober, according to reports.

■ Demetrius White, of Durham, was arrested at 12:01 a.m. Tuesday on West Franklin Street on charges of carrying a concealed weapon and possession with intent to sell or distribute marijuana, according to Chapel Hill police reports.

An officer in the crowd had heard a description of a man who had a gun over his radio and noticed a bulge in White's right front pocket, reports state.

When he searched White, he discovered 27 grams of marijuana and a .38-caliber revolver, according to reports.

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