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Meissner Nordic club suffers third break-in in six months

Snowmobile found broken and abandoned



Matt Tipton uses a forklift to move the Meissner Nordic club's snowmobile inside Pro Caliber Motorsports for service on Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2017, in Bend. (Joe Kline/Bulletin photo)
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By mid-November in most years, members of the Meissner Nordic club would be watching the skies for snow and counting down the days until the ski season begins.

This year, they're repairing the damage from a break-in Saturday night at their storage facility at Virginia Meissner Sno-park, the third break-in during the last six months.

This time, the perpetrators took the club's snowmobile for a joyride and left it in the woods with a busted drive belt.

It's a lot of hassle for the nonprofit group that maintains and grooms more than 40 kilometers of trails fanning out from the sno-park on Century Drive, according to club president Susan Hopkins. Despite the thefts, the club remains on track to open the Nordic season at Meissner on Dec. 1, she said.

Club operations manager Larry Katz said the club suffered its first theft in May, when

someone broke in through a garage door and took a propane heater, chainsaws and other tools the club uses for offseason trail maintenance.

In August or early September, the backdoor of the garage was broken down, Katz said, and the chainsaws and tools bought to replace those that disappeared in the spring were stolen. Since, trail maintenance equipment has been kept in Bend.

In the most recent incident, the perpetrators appear to have started in the garage, where a section of siding was peeled back to open a hole large enough to crawl through. Inside the garage, they found the keys to the snowmobile and the nearby shipping container where the snowmobile was stored.

Katz said preliminary estimates put the cost of repairing the snowmobile at \$300 to \$500, about half of what it spends to fuel the club's Sno-Cat groomer for a month.

Hopkins said the club always has operated with limited resources, dependent on contributions from members, fundraiser events such as the annual Luminaria night ski, and a cash box at the trailhead where skiers can make a donation.

Katz said there have been other incidents that targeted the club less directly. Each of the last two springs, the firewood storage building next to the Meissner shelter has been hit with shotgun blasts, and much of the wood stored inside has been stolen.

Katz said the club has approached the U.S. Forest Service about putting up a gate that would keep people from driving up the road to the Meissner shelter, but has not received an answer.

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