

UNC Students Call for More Transparency and Urgency for Campus Safety Alerts

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CHAPEL HILL, NC – UNC’s crime alert system Alert Carolina informs students, staff, faculty, and community members about certain threats on campus.

There have been a few messages sent out so far this semester, including a warning of a shooting over the weekend. Some students have found the number of messages comforting, believing that it must mean crimes are low on campus. However, that is not the case.

Darrell Jeter, the university’s Emergency Management and Planning Director, says only certain crimes require a timely warning including “...the crime occurs our campus geography. It has not yet been resolved. It does present an ongoing significant threat to our campus community and/or there has been a pattern of behavior.”

But some students, like UNC sophomore Samantha Freeman, say certain crimes don’t deserve an alert. “Sometimes it's something about a stolen scooter or a stolen bicycle. And so, I mean, that's not really like super important...It’s definitely not one of the most important things to be alerted of,” Freeman says.

She says that other crimes, like sexual assault and rape, should take precedence when alerts are sent. Six rapes have been reported since the start of the semester until March 8. Some happened recently, while others happened months or years ago.

“I think, you know, scooter theft is one thing, but people getting sexually assaulted definitely needs to like take priority. And they definitely need to push notification for that more often, and I'm sad that they haven't,” Freeman says.

Alyson Thompson, a junior at UNC, says she also wished more alerts focused on sexual assault were sent. “I've made a habit...not all the time, but every once in a while, I'll check the actual like police log because I feel like there's some things that I haven't seen.”

Thompson says she also wants more transparency from university police, “I want to make sure that I'm kind of able to update places where I feel safe and kind of have the information to make those decisions. So, I feel just giving us more information in a timely manner would help a lot.”

And Jeter also agrees that individuals should take their safety into their own hands, “We rely on our students, faculty, and staff to stay informed, be prepared, and take action for your own safety, so that if something does occur, you can feel empowered to take appropriate actions to protect yourself.”