

Area hit by flurry of phone thefts

By Laura Bond

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A man arrested by Ruston police late last week was apparently a suspect in one cell phone theft and had a warrant out for him in the disappearance of another phone.

The suspect, Melvin Anthony Reed, 19, of Ruston, allegedly committed one theft Jan. 31 and another back in October.

Ruston Police Public Information Officer Lt. Curtis Hawkins said an RPD investigator who knew Reed was a suspect in an ongoing theft investigation spotted and arrested him around McAllister Street on Friday. On Jan. 31 near Super Tobacco Mart, Reed allegedly asked an acquaintance to borrow a cell phone and bicycle and then disappeared with them. Reed is also suspected of asking to borrow a phone and taking off with it in the October case.

The arrest is at least the fourth for Ruston police this month involving a case where a suspect allegedly asked to borrow a cell phone and then ran off with it in hand. Just more than a week ago, three teens were arrested on the Louisiana Tech campus after allegedly attacking a Tech student and stealing his cell phone.

Tech Police Chief Randal Hermes said the phone borrowing scam had become prevalent enough over the last few months that an e-mail alert was sent to faculty, staff and students warning them of the scheme.

If a cell phone is stolen, Hermes advises people to call police and contact their cell phone provider to cancel the service.