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Some residence hall students experience problems with mail delivery

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Caitlin Courtright is among the lucky ones.

Courtright, who lives in Douglas Hall, said thieves opened a letter addressed to her looking for money and giftcards, but didn't steal the check a friend had sent her, likely because they couldn't cash it.

"I was just more angry," Courtright said. "It made me think maybe you shouldn't send money or gift cards in the mail."

Courtright's experience is not an isolated incident. Other dorm residents have reported mail being opened or disappearing entirely.



Kim Eckman, senior general studies major, checks her mail in Stevenson North Wednesday afternoon.

Residents expose mail issues

One such case is sophomore history major Michael Murphy, who said he is missing one package and two birthday presents, totalling about \$100. The packages, Murphy said, were sent around Valentine's Day.

A two-year resident of Douglas Hall, Murphy said this is the first semester he has experienced mail problems.

"It's not like my address has changed. I have lived in the same place for the past two years," Murphy said.

Murphy said he spoke with Alexandra Miller, graduate director of residence hall desks, regarding his mail problem, and said he was disheartened by her response.

"She sounded as if she was unable to help or unwilling to help," Murphy said. "She told me that if she did have it, she couldn't give it to me."

Murphy said a note was left to look out for his mail, but he hasn't heard anything about it since.

"I'm sure whoever took my mail ate my cookies, took my money and spent my gift card," Murphy said.

Murphy is not the only Douglas Hall resident reporting problems with mail. Freshman biology major Alex Bean ordered an Against Me poster two months ago.

"They said, 'Well, if anything would have come, there would have been a pink slip in it,'" Bean said.

Other students have reported receiving their mail several days late. Kim Davis, freshman electrical engineering major, said she received a cell phone she had ordered late.

"It was sent here first class, and it should have been here the next day. I didn't get it until three days later," Davis said. Davis is a resident of Grant Hall.

Freshman accountancy major David Hansell had a similar problem.

"I got a replacement cell phone, and it was supposed to be Fedex-ed and get here in two days. I got it in six," Hansell said. "And you know damn well that FedEx got it here in two days."

Response to the problem

Kelly Wesener, director of Housing and Dining, said that the staff is able to provide a response that is appropriate.

"Those responses can range from helping a student contact the post office to track missing mail to reporting any suspect activity to the University Police," Wesener said in an e-mail. Wesener declined to comment on the matter in person or by phone.

One common thread linking students' stories of missing mail is Valentine's Day. Several students said they have not received mail that was supposed to be delivered after Feb. 14.

Freshman nursing majors Courtney Antczak and Katrina Means, both Lincoln Hall residents, said they have not received Valentine's Day cards. Freshman undecided major Nick Barich is missing \$20 in cash from his grandparents, which was sent in a card around Feb. 14. Freshman nursing major Clair Smid is in a similar predicament.

It is unclear what effect the university's closing following the Feb. 14 tragedy had. Wesener said mail service to the residence halls was not interrupted.

But DeKalb postmaster Nancy Gosch said that mail service to the dorms was stopped. The U.S. Postal Office in DeKalb delivers the mail daily to the residence halls, unless NIU explicitly tells them not to, Gosch said.

"Once they had security staff at the dorms, mail service resumed," Gosch said. When that was, however, Gosch could not recall.

The extent of the mail problem, however, is unknown. Sophomore biology major Michael Kelly, a community adviser in Stevenson Hall, said he has not heard of any problems with the mail. Other students, when asked if they have had mail problems, say they do not check their mail often in the first place.

Some students have reported no problems at all. Freshman history major Alexander Lee described his mail service as "quick, fast and no problem."

Skyla Jackson, junior public health major, also spoke highly of Grant Hall's mail delivery.

"I have never had a problem and I've been in Grant for three years," Jackson said.

Even though he hasn't received his poster, Bean said he and his roommate still get mail.

“We have gotten mail and packages since, so if it is people taking [mail], then it’s them taking things they want,” Bean said.

Several calls have been placed to the University Police over the past couple weeks regarding this subject. Thus far, none of the calls have been returned.

Mail theft is a felony, punishable by a fine or up to five years in prison. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service recommends not using the postal service to send cash.