Two arrested in Prineville Bi-Mart burglary

by Cheryl McDermott

Police officers, sheriffâ€™s deputies, fire & rescue personnel, and members of the Central Oregon Emergency Response Team (CERT) all responded to an alarm at a Prineville Bi-Mart store early Wednesday morning, ultimately leading to the arrest of two teenagers.

According to a news release issued by Chief Eric Bush with the Prineville Police Department, two officers and Deschutes County Sheriffâ€™s deputies spotted a suspect inside the store shortly before 2 a.m. â€œHe appeared to be holding a rifle in a case,â€• Bush said.

Because of the added danger of a possibly armed suspect combined with the fact that the store stocks firearms and ammunition, additional law enforcement officers including CERT members (Central Oregonâ€™s version of SWAT) were called in to assist.

Crook County Fire & Rescue personnel assisted with lighting equipment to illuminate the building, and CERT team members cleared the building roof and began an approach.

According to Bush, as CERT members were approaching, the two suspects â€œmade their presence knownâ€• and they were taken into custody inside the store without incident. When the two were arrested they were not armed, Sgt. Andrea Vaughn said.

Robert James Atkinson, 18, and an unidentified 17-year-old boy have been charged with second-degree burglary and criminal mischief, and first-degree theft. Atkinson was lodged in the Crook County Jail, and the underage suspect was turned over to the countyâ€™s juvenile department, said Bush.

Preliminary investigation determined that the suspects removed, or were attempting to remove, about $2,100 in merchandise. A display and other items in the store were also damaged, Bush wrote in the news release.

â€œThe Prineville Police Department wishes to thank the City of Prineville Public Works Department, Crook County Fire and Rescue, the Redmond Fire Department and the Oregon Department of Transportation for their help in bringing needed equipment to the scene and in controlling traffic in the area. The CERT Team was instrumental in bringing this potentially dangerous situation to a peaceful end,â€• Bush said.

Portions of NE Third Street, NE Laughlin Road, NE Combs Flat Road, and Hickey Farms Drive were closed during the incident.

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