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### 'Barefoot bandit' believed to be headed east

By Sarah Brown

Pella Municipal Airport manager Shane Vandevort arrived at the Pella, Iowa, airport the morning of June 21 and noticed something amiss: The doors that he had locked the evening before were unlocked. Airport staff discovered missing cash and clothing, evidence that someone had accessed the FBO and maintenance hangar as well as a private T-hangar, and significant damage to the lock on the baggage door of the aircraft in the hangar. A courtesy vehicle had been stolen.

The break-in fit a pattern of recent crimes in Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois that law enforcement officials believe may be the work of Colton Harris-Moore, the teenager accused of a rash of aircraft thefts and other crimes in the Pacific Northwest. Now, the 19-year-old Washington native may be headed east, leaving a trail of break-ins in his wake.

Dubbed the "barefoot bandit" because of bare footprints he is accused of leaving at the scene of several crimes, Harris-Moore is suspected in at least four airplane thefts and [hundreds of other crimes](#), including burglary, theft, and credit-card fraud. Police in Nebraska have issued an arrest warrant for Harris-Moore following a break-in at the Norfolk airport, [according to news reports](#).


The series of break-ins underscores the importance of adhering to the principles of [AOPA's Airport Watch](#): Lock up and look out. In some cases, one additional lock can make a big difference. The burglar at Pella Municipal was able to gain access to a locked hangar, Vandevort said, but could not break into the SR22 inside.

"That was the last thing that stopped him," Vandevort said. "... Had the keys been in the airplane in the locked hangar, he would have flown away."

AOPA reminds airport employees, pilots, and aircraft owners across the country to lock their aircraft and follow the recommendations of the [Airport Watch Program](#).

"I encourage pilots not only to think about locking their aircraft, but to also consider the many auxiliary locks for wheels, propellers, and throttles on the market available to aircraft owners as additional layers of security," said AOPA Manager of Security and Borders Brittney Miculka. "The number of aircraft stolen each year has been in the single digits. The general aviation community needs to be proactive, so that this one person's alleged crimes don't destroy this single-digit run."

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