

Inflatable ape returned unharmmed

King Kong made it back to his Springfield home safely for Christmas.

Three Missouri State University fraternity members returned the 200-pound, 33-foot-tall inflatable Kong to its owners late Friday.

Kong vanished from the top of the Springfield 8 movie theater before dawn Thursday.

Adam Brown, vice president of Amberg Entertainment Inc., which rented out the ape to promote the new "King Kong" movie, said one of the men contacted Springfield 8 and arranged Kong's return in exchange for no charges being filed against them if he returned the inflatable ape unharmed.

Amberg CEO Ted Amberg said he realized the theft "was a prank that went too far," but it was "not done in a malicious way."



Kong

The air-filled ape vanished after thieves apparently scaled the roof. Video surveillance shows at least three people on the roof between 4:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Brown said the thieves left behind the air motor and sand bags that kept it from blowing away.

The missing inflatable, the only one in Southwest Missouri, is worth about \$7,000 or \$8,000 but is inoperable without the air blower, Brown said.

Brown said he thought the suspects who took King Kong might not have had any idea the theft is a felony. The thieves were originally suspected to be juveniles since the heist occurred after Springfield schools dismissed for the winter holidays.

King Kong was discovered missing Thursday when a photographer went to take pictures of it.

Brown said King Kong will return to his perch Tuesday after a weekend of rest.

He said he expected the thieves would be required to perform some type of community service.

The names of the thieves and their fraternity were not released.