

AGRI-SECURITY: REDUCING THEFT AND VANDALISM

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Unfortunately, most crimes perpetrated against farm and agribusiness operations are by individuals either familiar with or working with someone that is familiar with the owner and/or operation. Historically, such criminals have often turned out to be a past employee, visitor, customer, farmer, or member of the local community.

To a much lesser degree, there are instances, where a criminal may not be familiar with an operation such as in the cases of anhydrous ammonia thefts. However, whether someone is familiar or not with the property, thieves often “case” a place or test its security before they strike. Many thieves will tend to walk a good distance onto a property and park their vehicles along a road in order to avoid detection. That is why it is important to monitor and report any suspicious or unusual behavior to law enforcement immediately especially on roads adjacent or nearby a farm or agribusiness.

All farm and agribusiness operations should encourage employees, family, friends and neighbors to report to law enforcement any unusual or suspicious activity on or nearby the property, especially at operations on a 24-hour schedule. When reporting, get a description of the individual and a license number along with a description of the vehicle, but no one should put their own safety at risk while trying to do so.

Although some owners and managers tend to have an attitude of “no unwanted attention” this is what many criminals are hoping for. Law enforcement is always willing to come and assess any security issues and firmly believes that it is always

better to report any suspicious activity and find out it was a “NO CAUSE” situation rather than not to report at the time and find out a major crime has taken place and might have been stopped at the time it happened.

Research and “prison” interviews indicate that reducing access and using obstacles will slow down a perpetrator from stealing and/or vandalizing thus acting as a deterrent and reducing the likelihood of a criminal act. Reducing access to buildings, equipment, and fields can easily be done by limiting and reducing the number of access roads, using gates and other physical barriers such as earth berms.

Closing and locking windows and doors on both buildings and equipment will slow down a potential thief. The use of a motion alarm can serve as both a deterrent and a warning that someone or something is in a sensitive area of the operation. Recently, the use of a motion alarm on a local livestock operation led to the arrest of an individual for stealing animals.

In the case of a farm, the entire farm does not need to be locked and alarmed. Ideally, lock and alarm rooms and doors that provide access to key areas of concern such as chemical and fertilizer storage, equipment, milk house, animals, pharmaceutical storage, and the repair shop. Whenever possible, keep items of concern out of sight as much as possible to avoid communicating to potential thieves that you may have something they want.

Using motion lights help alert you and others to monitor for any unusual or suspicious activity that may be occurring.

Pay attention to your surroundings, when you get up at night to use the bathroom look outside the window.

When putting up a new building or other physical changes to a farm or agribusiness, many local law enforcement agencies provide free consultations about what to do in regards to physical security for the operation. Such a visit is a great time to develop assesses and implement a security plan. Besides helping law enforcement gain familiarity with your operation, they can often quickly assess your vulnerabilities and give you a “short list” of things to do in regards to physical security. Often their assessments will account for criminal activity concerns within their jurisdiction. Many law enforcement agencies provide a representative for group meetings to highlight and recap common physical security concerns and how to address them.

Today, locks, lights and alarms can provide many layers of security for just a few hundred dollars. By using physical security at key or vulnerable areas and consulting with local law enforcement, both farms and agribusiness can reduce the risk of likelihood of theft and vandalism very quickly and inexpensively.

Sources: Office of the Sheriff – Livingston, Monroe; New York State Police – Troop E

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