

## **What to do When a Theft Occurs at Your Business**

A piece of equipment is stolen from your business. Who should you contact first? What happens once you file a report? Should you contact anyone else? Here's a brief look at who to contact and what should happen once a theft is reported.

### **Reporting a Theft**

#### ***Local Authorities***

First and foremost, members are encouraged to contact their local law enforcement agencies to report a theft. The police officer will file a report and assign a case number documenting the theft. (You will need this case number for insurance purposes.) In addition, the officer should place the equipment's identification number into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), a national database of stolen items. Then, if the item is ever located, it will be recognized as stolen. "After the officer files a report, ask them to put it into the NCIC," stressed a senior trooper with the Iowa State Patrol Vehicle Theft Unit. "He should say 'okay.' Then, ask to receive a copy of the report."

#### ***Insurance Company***

Next, members should notify their insurance company regarding the theft.

#### ***I-NEDA***

Members are also encouraged to contact the Association whenever a theft occurs since I-NEDA maintains a master list of stolen equipment reported by its members. This list is shared with both the Iowa and Nebraska State Patrol Vehicle Theft Units on a regular basis. They, in turn, make sure the stolen equipment is listed with the NCIC. According to the Iowa State Patrol Vehicle Theft Unit, this list is a very valuable tool.

#### ***Manufacturer***

Several manufacturers also maintain databases of stolen equipment, which makes them an important contact as well.

### **Reporting Suspicious Activity**

A customer stops by the dealership with a piece of equipment he'd like to trade. You suspect it's stolen. How do you find out whether or not it's stolen?

First of all, gather as much information as you can from the customer. "Tell him the individual who does the wheeling and dealing at the dealership is not in, but you'd be happy to take down the information and get back to him," stated one trooper, who recommends getting the customer's driver's license number, the equipment's VIN, a phone number to call back, as well as the license number.

Once you have gathered the information and the customer is no longer at the dealership, contact your local law enforcement agency. Report where you are from, briefly share your suspicions and provide the numbers. The officer should run the information through the NCIC and be able to tell you whether or not the equipment is stolen.

## **I-NEDA – Helping Authorities**

Nearly 50 pieces of equipment were reported stolen by I-NEDA members over the last 15 months. As a result of this increased activity, I-NEDA is working closely with different law enforcement agencies to develop an understanding of the process and to assist them however possible. In June, Association staff members met with a special agent from the National Insurance Crime Bureau and state troopers from the Iowa State Patrol Vehicle Theft Unit.

The Vehicle Theft Unit helps local law enforcement agencies and equipment dealers check vehicle identification numbers (VIN) to identify whether or not a piece of equipment is stolen. The unit also works to re-educate officers about what to look for when it comes to tracking down stolen equipment.

Recently, the unit worked with the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy to educate officers on law enforcement standards and to communicate the type of equipment being stolen, as well as how it's being transported. "We reviewed several basic tips with them, like if a piece of equipment is missing a license plate, they have the right to seize it under law," explained one trooper. "It lets them know what to look for."

Another trooper added, "We continue to work at developing relationships with local officers. Working together as a team remains very important to all of us." The trooper attends a monthly auto theft meeting with various law enforcement agencies to discuss what's going on in the area. "This is a perfect time for local police to bring out ideas," he stressed. "It also allows us to put out alerts to other local law enforcement agencies."

In closing, the troopers stressed the importance of contacting your local law enforcement agency *first* to report a theft and/or suspicious activity. "Make sure you ask the officer the right questions. For example, will you put the vehicle identification number into the NCIC? And, can I receive a copy of the report?"

"Most importantly, if you are not satisfied with the response of your local authorities and feel you're not getting the service you deserve, please call us (the Vehicle Theft Unit). We can help."

Contact the Iowa Vehicle Theft Unit at 515-281-6176 or the Nebraska Unit at 515-471-0113.

## **SAMPLE**

### **National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Record**

On 5/16/2005, an Iowa equipment dealership reported a Case skid loader with a 72-inch bucket stolen. It was entered into NCIC and the record for that item is reproduced below. If any officer should see this skid loader and check the Product Identification Number through NCIC, this is what he/she would see:

- 1) MKE/STOLEN VEHICLE - HOLD FOR LATENTS**
- 2) ORI/IA0910000**
- 3) VIN/N5M405192 VYR/2005**
- 4) VMA/CASE VMO/FE VST/LD VCO/TAN/BLK DOT/20050516**
- 5) OCA/05V0428**

**6) MIS/CASE 420 SKID STEER L0ADER W 72 INCH BUCKET**

**7) NIC/V157451858 DTE/20050516 1945 EDT**

**8) ORI IS (NAME) CO 555 555-5555**

**9) IMMED CONFIRM RECORD WITH ORI**

Explanation:

- 1) The vehicle is stolen and it should be held for possible identification of fingerprints.
- 2) The number that identifies the law enforcement agency that made NCIC entry.
- 3) The VIN number and year of the skid loader.
- 4) The make, model and general description of the skid loader, followed by the date of theft.
- 5) County Sheriff's Office case number.
- 6) A miscellaneous field that gives a general description of the stolen item.
- 7) An NCIC reference number with the date and time the theft was entered into the NCIC.
- 8) The originator of the report and that department's phone number.
- 9) A note that, if the vehicle is found, the finder should immediately contact the originator of the entry and insure all information is accurate and that the vehicle has been located.

Note: When the vehicle is found the originator immediately takes it out of NCIC.