

## **Theft Prevention—You Hold the Keys**

Equipment dealers hold the keys to reducing thefts and costs associated with thefts. Knowing how to use available resources to combat theft will help you reduce the possibility of theft at your dealership.

Theft prevention begins with two basic keys— building security and lot security.

### **Building Security**

- Check the elements of exterior doors: the door (heavy construction, high quality, and solid); locks (good quality); hinges (located inside the building or attached with welded pins; and the door frame (filled to avoid spreading in rigid steel buildings).
- Overhead doors are often left out of the security equation. Take safety measures such as shutting off power to openers, securing slide locks, and placing padlocks in the track one inch above a roller.
- Check that windows have good quality frames, with either burglary resistant glass or bars and grates over them. Some non-egress windows can either be nailed or screwed shut to help prevent entry.
- Nontraditional openings, such as walls, skylights, and air conditioning ventilation openings, should also be monitored.
- Arrange lighting inside the building to illuminate dark areas, vulnerable spots inside the building, the interior store front, and cash registers and safes.

### ***Lot Security***

An 8-year study of equipment dealers on theft from open lots revealed that these dealers experienced a total of 3,604 thefts reported to authorities from 1995-2004. The value of the stolen equipment totaled over \$22 million.

**Fencing** is the first item of concern when protecting an open lot. A good fence remains an excellent first obstacle, since it keeps many intruders out and the casual thief will go somewhere else. Chain link fencing is ideal, since it does not decrease visibility. The fence should be six to eight feet high with posts set no less than 10 feet apart. Three-strand barbed wire or rolled razor wire on top of the fence is good in areas with less traffic, such as the rear and sides of the lot.

Keeping the fence in good repair, clear of weeds and debris, and maintaining a 10-foot “free zone” between stored equipment and the fence will also help deter theft. Spot weld the hinge bolts and pins on gates. Chain and lock the gates when the business closes. Make sure to either bring the padlock inside, or lock the padlock during business hours so would-be thieves can’t switch locks with yours, making it easy to enter the lot after hours.

**Other barriers** can be used for perimeter protection. Walls and hedges should be no more than three feet high. This allows law enforcement officers to view the premises from their vehicles. Posts should protrude three feet above the ground and be set in concrete four to six feet deep. Space them close together so a vehicle cannot be driven between them. Posts can also be connected with a heavy cable.

**Placement of equipment** can reduce exposure to thefts. Non-self-propelled and disabled self-propelled equipment should be placed around the inside perimeter of the lot to offer additional protection. Lawn and garden equipment, both new and used, should remain inside a secured building during non-business hours. If lawn and garden equipment is left outside, it should be cabled, chained, or placed in a well-secured area.

**Lighting** remains an important security element. Illuminate the target stocks well (small tractors, lawn and garden machines, and small implements). Areas around the building and lot entrances should be lighted. If the dealership has closed-circuit television cameras to record activities, good lighting in the area will ensure better picture quality.

**Electronic lot security** is another method of protecting your business. Private security companies survey your business and determine the number and location of monitors needed. There are several different types of electronic security systems, most monitored from a central location. Perpetrators are normally warned that they are under surveillance.

Theft, whether from your building or an open lot, can affect the profitability of your business. Take the time to review the security of your dealership and consider what you can do to make your dealership more attractive to customers and less attractive to thieves. Remember, you hold the keys.

*Source: Federated Mutual Insurance Company*