Hugh Tilley offers some useful advice on ways of making your maintenance facility and equipment more secure

The need to be Security conscious

Hugh Tilley offers some useful advice on ways of making your maintenance facility and equipment more secure. T

Heft and vandalism are now a major problem for many golf clubs and while once it was the clubhouse which was the target it has now extended and on some courses it has become impossible for greenkeepers to leave anything out even while they have lunch. For many the first routine in the morning is to check round to make sure that flags and markers are in position – or that nothing has been dumped. A number of clubs have taken quite radical action to secure their equipment and make everything as vandal-proof as is reasonably possible. This has meant investing in lock-ups, security equipment, lighting and alarms. Small powertools such as brushcutters and work-shop equipment are particularly 'nickable' because they are relatively easy to sell, however there has been an increase in the number of larger items such as mowers (including triples) and tractors which have gone missing, and it is assumed that these are stolen to order. Investing in security may help keep insurance costs down, may even allow premiums to be reduced, but in any event it must be worthwhile if only to avoid all the hassle. A few courses, such as St Enodoc in Cornwall (see Page 19), have resorted to employing security guards. Whether such a measure will succeed in other places is a moot point because of the extensive nature of most golf courses and the fact that the presence of a guard may even be an incentive for some to play 'catch me.' Most vandalism is more annoy-
omission. Swinton has gone further than this and has a full intruder alarm system linked direct to the police.

With the vulnerability of all equipment the start for all security must be consideration of fencing the greenkeepers sheds. A good lockable compound will deter casual vandals, locks bought with multiple keys allow authorised access. An electric fence - as used to contain livestock - is also a useful deterrent, but will need regular maintenance and very visible public warning.

The buildings themselves need to be secure, those 'sheds' normally found on the golf course offer little resistance to the thief. Walls and roof are only timber or a result the more effective answer corrugated steel and asbestos. As vulnerable points but reinforcing them may not be worthwhile if walls and roof are only timber or corrugated steel and asbestos. As a result the more effective answer may to build or buy a secure building or container and leave the shed unlocked - then no damage is done trying to get in.

Many golf clubs have bought old shipping containers and use these for their vulnerable equipment. The problems with shipping containers are that firstly they are unsightly, secondly they are not spacious enough to put tractors and larger mowers in, and thirdly they are liable to be highly corroded, or even full of holes. Purpose made secure storage is available from a number of companies such as Groundhog, nor is it excessively expensive. This company has recently introduced a half round timber cladding to the range and added a pitched tiled roof which makes the unit visually acceptable, although this adds significantly to the cost because each timber is screwed to the steel shell. Smaller containers may also be useful around the course for temporary tool storage, while lockable boxes to fit pick-up truck, tractor linkage or turf maintenance vehicle may ensure the safety of small hand tools, chemicals and other items which may 'walk' when a greenkeeper's back is turned.

Tractor trailers are not usually at risk; however smaller trailers such as those designed for ATVs and road use are, so too are major items such as mini excavators and similar plant. These can be protected by diverse means, the simplest with trailers being either a wheel clamp or locking the hitch. A better method however is to concrete in a hitching post and lock to this. Tractors are at risk to joy riders even if they haven't the glamour of an XR2. Tractors deserve a little more immobilising than just locking and removing the key - many car immobilisers work. In bad areas if the tractor is not actually removed it will lose 'bits' or have dirt put in the fuel - perhaps in spite because it can't be driven. Batteries are saleable.

Lighting can provide one of the most useful deterrents providing there are likely to be people around to spot a potential intruder or vandal, - there is no point in illuminating buildings just for their benefit! PIR - or passive infra-red, or better, dual technology systems, which automatically switch lights on is particularly effective because it alerts people, however it can be prone to false alarms and failures if bought cheap and not carefully sited and set-up. Is it realistic to expect a £20 domestic PIR light from a DIY shop to protect £100,000 of equipment? It may be more effective to erect the lights on a tall standard so that it can be seen at greater distances, such lights are also useful to light the area for working in winter.

Of course such lighting is useless for security when the buildings are hidden or remote, as are audible alarms, however PIR and other more sophisticated forms of intruder detection are available to link by radio to a remote alarm in the clubhouse or even to page someone. Proprietary systems can be linked to a private security company, to the head greenkeeper or to the police, however because of the inevitable delay from alarm to response most are of limited use to a golf club. Video surveillance and recording seems to be proving remarkably effective in many places.

The crime prevention officer of the local police is one useful and free source of advice. Also there are a growing number of specialist security equipment suppliers happy to give advice, but don't expect it to be unbiased, after all they are after a sale. Some insurance companies also have advice to give, although this may be negative, perhaps suggesting that items at risk won't be covered if not secured or protected, or only at a higher premium or excess.

The police recommend making equipment identifiable. One ideas may be to paint mowers and greens equipment in day-glo colours - they would help the player to see them while making them less valuable to acquire illegally and sell on. Stamping the postcode on the chassis is another simple identification ploy.