

## How Do You Do...?

### The Question -- How Do You Prevent/Counteract Theft and Vandalism on your Fields?

*Answered by Abby L. McNeal, Pleasant View Sports Center*

We've had several instances of vandalism including: a 4-wheel drive pickup drive out on the field during our initial seeding process, furniture being burned on the field and the ever popular graffiti. We have done several things to cut down on the problems, but haven't come up with a sure-fire way of stopping it. We have recessed lighting at the buildings - all on a timer, the parking lot is fenced to keep people out of there and we have extra concrete ballards to prevent any more vehicles on the field. The graffiti was handled with a good power washing and sealant was then applied to the brick. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of support from the police. They will patrol after an incident for a couple weeks but that's about it from them. Another problem is that the complex is on a dead end road and despite what we've already done, it remains a good "party spot."

*Answered by Dan Douglas, Reading (PA) Phillies*

Reading Municipal Memorial Stadium is surrounded by a 10 foot high brick wall which is our first defense against theft and vandalism. Strategic parking lot and other exterior lights are on from dusk to dawn. At least two persons are in charge of making sure all doors and gates are locked during non-business hours. City police also perform routine patrols around the outside of the stadium.

Safeguards are also taken inside the brick wall. Graffiti proof paint is used in highly susceptible areas like restrooms. All tools are put away and locked in sheds or cabinets at the shop. All equipment is stored in the secured shop area. Keys and spark plug wires are removed from any equipment that may have to be kept outside the shop overnight. Also, irrigation controls are kept locked and quick-couplers are hidden so that the rain out scene in the movie, "Bull Durham," can't be recreated.

Our final defense is a security alarm system. All offices, storage areas, and the press box are protected along with team pictures and hall of fame plaques that are displayed in the concourse. The alarm system is tied directly to the police and only full time staff members have the access code. The

combination of the alarm system, lighting and keeping potential targets under lock and key has kept crime to a minimum in Reading.

*Answered by Steve Gies, Ashland (OR) Parks & Rec.*

Theft and vandalism are not significant problems in our area, but they do occur and seem to run in streaks. Our operational procedures include several things which I believe help to discourage vandalism.

When designing facilities, we try to use the best possible design and materials so that they are more resistant to vandalism or can be repaired more easily when damaged. If vandalism should occur, we repair any damage as quickly as possible. This may range from sodding damaged turf to painting a wall or replacing equipment if needed. We have found that if a problem isn't corrected quickly, more vandalism is apt to occur. When preparing our annual budget, we build in an estimated amount to cover repairs due to vandalism. All our concession and restroom facilities can be locked at night. And, fortunately, we have park patrol officers who routinely patrol facilities and place extra emphasis on "hot spots" for vandalism when needed.

Although not specifically related to maintenance, I believe that one of the most effective practices we have is to actively work to instill a pride of ownership in community groups who use the fields. The various teams and leagues that use our fields take pride in the quality of "their" fields, help keep them in good shape and, through peer interaction, see that others do too. It's a win/win atmosphere for everyone.

*Do you have a specific question or problem that you'd like to see covered in this column? We're always open to suggestions. Send your suggestions to: Stephanie Watts, Newsletter Editor, STMA Headquarters, 1375 Rolling Hills Loop, Council Bluffs, IA 51503; fax them to (800) 366-0391; or e-mail them to SportsTMgr@aol.com.*