

Security In Your Business

NEXT TIME you can't find that chain saw, electric drill or hank of new rope that you left sitting in the workshop, better alert the local authorities. You could be the victim of a burglary.

Arborists, industrial weed control firms, and professional turf-grass managers across the country are reporting bizarre acts of burglaries that connote professionalism in crime far above the level of local pranksters. And it's on the increase.

City foresters in Illinois recently discovered prized black walnut trees removed. A local arborist in Ohio had three chain saws stolen from a parked truck. A weed control firm in the southeast reported 50 cases of herbicides taken from the back-end warehouse—in broad daylight. A golf superintendent in the mid-west went to his equipment shed early one morning and discovered several power mowers, a tractor and a backhoe missing. He had personally put the equipment away the previous night. The list goes on and on.

Professional thieves have found small business firms one of the most lucrative sources in their "trade." Unlike private homes where they run the risk of neighbors or residents, small businesses seldom have night watchmen, protective equipment or adequate security. Furthermore, the nature of the business often takes the owner and other personnel away from the shop for several hours in a day. In and out traffic of clients can cause congestion and there aren't enough eyes to watch every part of the operation all the time.

Thus, when a truck enters the property with two people in it the owner can have cause for anxiety if one person heads for the main office and the other for the shop area. Whether in the act of innocence or otherwise, it happens every day.

Generally, professional thieves who raid firms of the "Green Industry" are not after high priced equipment such as bucket trucks, chippers, cranes, mounted sprayers and big mowers. Rather, they find it much easier to "lift" smaller items more commonly found elsewhere or chemicals which can be

blackmarketed into the agricultural community.

Chain saws are a hot item. Mobile radios, small power mowers, trailing spray rigs, ropes—almost anything that someone else in another industry or another part of the country can use are potential items. Even larger items, if commonly around like trucks, can be successfully stolen and re-sold. The rule of thumb is that if you need it, someone else probably needs it too.

The professional burglar is as highly skilled in his endeavor as you are in your business. He knows his "market" and just what can be "fenced" quickly to return a fast buck. He also knows exactly the time to strike. Don't necessarily count on being hit only at night. The professionals can pull a heist at mid-morning just as easily as they can at midnight.

They work singly or in pairs; sometimes in gangs. They operate from stolen vehicles, rented cars, or on foot. They know that small items will not be as likely to be missed. Also, many firms have deductible insurance against theft. An owner with \$200 deductible is not likely to report the disappearance of a \$150 chain saw. Or a \$225 mower.

What can you do to protect yourself against these crimes? First, take a good look at your physical arrangement—draw it out on paper—and decide where the most vulnerable areas are. Consider that along with a security system you must also include items such as fire protection, power losses, etc. Second, map out a plan of action that will facilitate easy entrance to company property by workers but provide a barrier to customers. Redesign the job truck beds so that equipment is not visibly exposed. (It may also be to your advantage to do this from a safety angle.) Make sure that responsible people are around the premises during business hours—including lunch and coffee breaks.

Here are some other tips:

Keep a watchdog. One chain saw dealer in Cleveland keeps a large dog tied up in his parts department. One look and two barks from him

and anyone immediately knows that he means business. A dog tied up in the work yard between shop and office can patrol both areas successfully. If you're located in a more rural area, consider keeping geese. While they do not command quite as much respect as a dog, their hearing is more acute. And the noise created by a flock of startled geese will surely get your attention.

Adequate lighting. This is a must if you park equipment outside or have several buildings. Other than the fact that OSHA requires certain lighting for safety, light (particularly bright light) has a deterrent effect. A well lighted area reduces the opportunity for midnight requisitions. For some, stealing is a game with odds on not getting caught. You can reduce the odds by outside and inside lighting.

Install fences. Security fences won't stop the professional, but they may slow him down. The object is to make your firm a less desirable place for a burglary to take place. Additionally when you have fences, you can also have gates and doors. Keep them locked when you or your employees are not there. That goes for daytime as well as dark. When the work crew is not physically in the work area, lock the gate. If you are a superintendent who must travel the course to check on work progress, lock the work area prior to leaving. If necessary, provide keys to trusted employees or job foremen. Be careful with keys, however; they have a habit of getting lost—or in possession of the wrong individual.

Invest in good locks. A cheap \$1.98 lock will give you about the same in protection. But a \$5 to \$10 bolt lock is a good investment. Easily "fenced" items such as saws, tools, radios, etc. should be kept behind an additional enclosed storage area. Good locks on truck compartments make it more difficult to "lift" these items. It's not a bad idea to periodically change locks all the way around the area.

Light beams that trip when crossed can be another device. They silently inform the owner when potential danger exists. Pressure sen-

(continued on page 30)

SECURITY IN YOUR BUSINESS

(from page 18)

sitive pneumatic signal tubes placed across the road in front of the workshop can also be used. In more sophisticated operations, investment in a closed-circuit television camera may be just the item to guard a truckload of expensive turf protection chemicals.

Cooperative business plan. Engage with several local firms who are in the same area as yours to periodically check on all businesses. Being helpfully nosy may prevent a burglary. Then too, should a neighboring owner find a crime taking place, he can use his own business telephone to alert the police.

Identify your property. This is of prime importance. Make note of serial numbers of large and small items. Keep these in a security vault or lockbox. Buy a set of marking dies and stamp each item with a code, name or other identifying mark. It's worth the investment! In certain areas these codes can be filed with local police. For vehicles, it's not a bad idea to make a small inconspicuous mark somewhere on

the vehicle, preferably on the underside. It could mean the difference between ownership and loss if a vehicle is recovered which resembles the one you are missing.

Be suspicious. We are our brother's keeper, but today you must take measures to insure that your brother keeps only what is his, and not yours. Individuals found in the work area should be firmly escorted off the property. Establish rules that no friends of employees are allowed to visit. Don't loan a chain saw to the neighbor of a client. He may be a neighbor who is moving out of the state tomorrow.

There's nothing wrong with questioning people as to their intentions, especially if they have your equipment in their hands. Speaking of equipment, don't permit your equipment to be used on off-duty hours at an employee's place of residence. It quickly has a habit of inadvertently becoming lost or misplaced. If your operation is small, consider permitting employees to bring their items to your shop area and use tools, etc. as one firm in Maryland does.

Inside job. As much as we don't expect it nor look for it, there is a certain amount of burglary that

takes place by employees, themselves. A tree climber may switch a new saddle for a personally owned but used saddle gained by previous employment. A chain saw in need of repairs suddenly and mysteriously disappears. Or a hank of manila rope wears out too fast. Yes, the substitution game is crafty and employees can become professionals at it. One employer recently said that he was being robbed "blind" from **within** his company. How do you put a stop to it?

One way, although not necessarily the best, is to label and mark every item in your inventory. Make lists of items carried in trucks and make drivers responsible for their being there. For chemicals, assign the distribution to a foreman who keeps all pesticides under lock and key. Provide work clothes and lockers. This discourages driving home from the last job. Have employees park their vehicles in front of the office and away from the work area.

Another way to reduce employee pilfering in areas where high value items are located is by bonding. While this may be satisfactory for some, others in the "Green Industry" find that it discourages potential

(continued on page 32)



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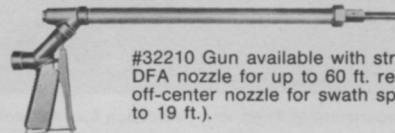
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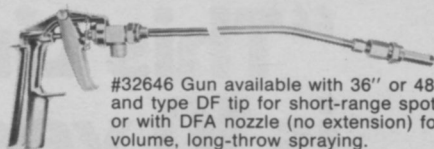


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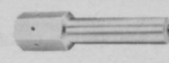
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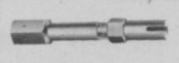
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employees. It's a good idea to have a pseudo-background check made before employees are hired. At least, check references, if any.

Bear in mind throughout your security plan that fire protection and security must go hand in hand. Plan fire exit routes that are workable. Some patented security systems have built-in fire alarms. (Incidentally, a fire alarm bell can be used to scare away burglars.) Develop your security system so that fire fighters will not be deterred by inaccessible locks or security gates that must be destroyed before entry is gained.

Security in your business is not the final objective in doing business. Rather, it must be implemented as a means of protecting your investment. The professional thief usually can outfox even the best devices if he desires. Your approach to security must be developed as a deterrent.

Park Irrigation Problems Toro Brochure Solves

For a park or recreation area to be an attractive, healthy, green environment for people, it must be watered adequately and consistently. And that can be accomplished with a minimum of manual attention, while actually conserving water, with the use of modern automatic underground irrigation systems, according to a new brochure from the Irrigation Division of The Toro Company.

The Toro brochure, titled "The Innovators Solve Turf Irrigation Problems in Park and Recreation Areas," points out that turf areas serving different purposes, such as picnic grounds and open play fields, require varying amounts of water at varying intervals.

Those variables can be accommodated with precision and efficiency, regardless of topography, soil or climatic conditions, geographic location or seasonal changes, with modern automatic irrigation systems, the brochure states.

According to Toro, irrigation equipment—including master controllers, satellite controllers, valves and sprinkler heads—can be matched to the specific watering needs of "any park or recreation area, under any given set of circumstances, present or future, anywhere, anytime."

Copies of the brochure may be obtained by writing to: Dept. PRA, Irrigation Division, The Toro Company, P.O. Box 489, Riverside, Calif. 92502.