

## Contractors equipment: Is your equipment secured?



Every year thousands of pieces of equipment, tools and construction-related items are either damaged or stolen from job sites and contractors' yards. The loss of tools, materials and equipment affects everyone working on this job. These losses are caused by employees, former employees, disgruntled employees, local gangs, children, vandals and vagrants. The direct costs of the loss are recognized when the stolen items have to be replaced. The indirect cost is much greater since it includes the loss of materials, which means down time for reordering and delivery; and loss of tools and equipment, which delays production and generates accusations between employees and subcontractors.

**To reduce the opportunity for loss, the following guidelines should be incorporated into your company's philosophy regarding theft and vandalism:**

### **COMMUNICATE YOUR COMPANY'S INTENT**

Preplanning can have positive lasting effects throughout the job. Communications should take place with all subcontractors and employees onsite, emphasizing that theft and vandalism will not be tolerated. All personnel should be encouraged to report any vandalism or theft of equipment or materials. No tools should be allowed to be used overnight or on weekends. Communication with the local police or security company should be made with discussions regarding delivery times of materials and products; delivery and storage of any special or critical equipment; special working hours, including regularly scheduled work times; as well as what to expect from a construction standpoint, movement in and out of equipment etc. Police or security should be given phone numbers of key personnel for work hours and after hours. All security personnel should be aware of how your equipment is identifiable. Discuss with local police what crime trends have occurred in these areas. This will give you an indication of the scale of past thefts.

If the project is going to last for several months, invite communication with the neighbors. Give them the phone numbers of key personnel to call if they see suspicious activity after hours. Emphasize to them that safety and security is a key factor regarding this construction site so that their children and family members will not be encouraged to trespass and play in the construction area and get injured.

### **SITE SECURITY**

Ensure your job site is well lit. This will allow people passing by, or police, to see the site and any individuals trespassing or suspicious activity.

If equipment is stored at a job site, park it under site lights. Stage materials and important equipment in well-lit areas. A well-lit site reduces the chance of entry by vandals or thieves.

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Keep an inventory list of all your tools and equipment. By assigning tools and equipment to your employees, you have an opportunity to track them down and hold the employee accountable.

Site fencing should be encouraged. This fence should be at least 8 feet in height and have only one entrance and exit.

Establish a clear area away from tool and material storage sheds to prevent employees or others from parking next to them and providing an opportunity to load and hide such items. All parking should be outside the perimeter fence.

All personnel should be informed that deliveries of materials and equipment are to be made during normal work hours. Unscheduled deliveries or pickups should not be allowed. Materials should be delivered in a reasonable time frame of when they will be installed. This will reduce congestion on the site and reduce the amount of materials subject to loss.

### TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT SECURITY

All tools and equipment should be readily identifiable. Mark all tools and equipment with a special color or marking. Document what identifying mark was made and where it was made on the equipment. Vehicle identification numbers should be engraved or stamped on the machine in at least two places. One place in the open and one in a hidden area. Painting the tops of cabs of mobile equipment helps identify them from the air. This will help you identify and recover this equipment in the event it is stolen.

Large equipment with buckets, blades, excavation arms, etc., should be lowered to the ground to help make the equipment immobile. Smaller equipment can be parked inside the reaches of a backhoe or between two larger pieces of equipment. Fuel cap locks should always be used. Keys should be removed from equipment. Anti-theft devices can also be installed on mobile equipment such as LoJack security systems, fuel cut-off switches, locks for tracks, boom or hydraulic arm locks are also available.

Is there a current equipment inventory list? This will help determine what exactly is missing.

All sheds, storage rooms and gang boxes should be locked when not in use. Keys to these items should be limited to supervisory personnel.

Equipment inventory and knowing where the equipment is located is critical. This applies to equipment in a yard or stored on a job site.

Standard padlocks have keys that can be duplicated very easily. Special locks should be used to secure job trailers, gang boxes, sheds, etc. Key control should be limited to supervisory personnel and these locks should be changed or rotated frequently.

All equipment with cabs should be locked at the end of the day.

### KEEP THESE QUESTIONS IN MIND

Are the windows on cabs protected from breakage?

Are equipment operators trained to inspect equipment for signs of vandalism or damage prior to operating?

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