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Loss Prevention

by Richard Keller, editor
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Following five years of high-level conferences and discussions about homeland security and bioterrorism, the main concern at the local level-the agricultural retailers' individual operations-is theft protection and being able to secure products from run-of-the-mill criminals, instead of terrorists.

Included in most theft protection discussions is how to secure anhydrous ammonia (NH3) facilities, but other facilities are receiving attention, too. Insurance company loss control representatives say the assessing of how to reduce theft exposure for NH3 has resulted in companies taking assessment of their entire operations' theft prevention.

Insurance companies have not come into the picture to require high-cost sophisticated theft protection devices and procedures unless there is a history of theft from facilities.

Five specific tools are being used to improve theft

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security. They are:

- 1) Upgraded and improved lighting of facilities.
- 2) Locking devices that are better than a padlock or padlock and chain.
- 3) Video surveillance installations.
- 4) Additional fencing with motion detector devices attached.
- 5) Tank additives specific to anhydrous ammonia.

Truck cargo security

The industry is concerned theft by organized crime rings might move from big cities to rural areas if crooks think there is a quick buck to be made. An example of criminal activity shift has occurred along much of the East and West coasts as many more semi-tractor trailers are stolen or broken into and the goods sold in North America or overseas.



Whole truck loads of goods are turning up missing--both manufactured items and raw commodities. During the pecan harvest season in California, semi-trailer loads of pecans disappeared overnight, and law enforcement officials were left without leads, but suspicions are that many of the stolen nuts were exported.

Hugo Gomez, Miami-based cargo theft security consultant, says, "There is a place to sell anything."

Gomez says robbery from trucks or stealing the whole tractor and trailer is as easy as stealing a car. "It is a crime for which the penalty is very low. Criminals that have been involved in other forms of crime have discovered it is easier and the profit is high."

"Padlocks on the trailer handle can easily be bypassed because the handle is the weakest spot on a trailer. There are much better places to secure doors using padlocks and plates or higher quality door locks," Gomez says.

He regularly tests new locking systems for truck trailers, and he warns that "these are only deterrents, and we are always looking for better deterrents."

Gomez suggests that the newest monitoring of tractor trailers is by global positioning systems (GPS). Trucks can be equipped with miniature GPS units to track whereabouts and trip a receiver alarm hundreds of miles away when the trailer door is opened.

Upgraded video equipment

Video surveillance is an area that is also being improved. An example is the AgCam sold by Dakota Micro. The improvement of video equipment is shown by this company's upgrading of its waterproof, golf-ball-sized



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cameras to operate in a range between minus 45 degrees and 150 degrees Fahrenheit.

The camera system was first invented to be mounted on farm equipment with a monitor in the driver's cab to keep track of areas obstructed from the cab. This includes monitoring the rear of truck trailers, too.

Surveillance is a growth area of the company's business because a video server can transfer four miniature video camera signals onto a computer viewable Web site. The cameras still have to be placed in stationary situations for uplinking to the Web site.

More than one video camera image can also be recorded on a digital video recorder. The cameras work in daylight and throughout the night with infrared imagery.

"The camera system is very adaptable and has gone from agriculture monitoring of equipment to monitoring livestock yards to surveillance of facilities," says Jeff Huckle, Dakota Micro sales and distribution manager.

Fencing as a deterrent

Fencing has not been as good a theft deterrent as might be thought. It is easy to use bolt cutters on padlocks, chains or heavy wire. To counter this problem, manufacturers have come up with vibration sensors that can be mounted to most types of fences including chain link, barbed wire or welded mesh. Some forms of these vibration sensor systems can also be mounted on building walls and doors.

Safeguards Technology, Inc. has a system that can be adjusted to appropriate levels of vibration to detect someone scaling the fence or even cutting through it. Vibration or attempts to cut the wire triggers alarms.

"I have had some companies install the new oval wire that sets off an alarm if it is cut. It is just a chain link fence with a wire that goes through it," explains Steve Davis, senior field representative for Michigan Millers Mutual Insurance Company.

Lighting and more

The Illinois Anhydrous Ammonia Security Grant Program, caused operators of approximately 900 NH₃ facilities in the state to assess their overall loss security. The grant application deadline for \$1.4 million of state money was Feb. 1. Those receiving grants for improving security of their NH₃ facilities will be reimbursed two-thirds of the cost of security improvements.

Lighting is one of those areas qualifying for funding. Effingham Equity with 12 full-time and three seasonal sales facilities has 14 anhydrous ammonia facilities, and

completing a security lighting survey was a key component of their grant application.

"Springfield Electric sells lights to electrical contractors. They did a free lighting survey for us. The increased lighting plan isn't simply our own idea to throw up a post here and there with lights on them," says Jamie Southard, safety and regulatory director for the Effingham, Ill.,-based retailer.

A company also needs to assess whether it might add night vision surveillance cameras because there is the option of "white" light or "yellow" light. "According to our consultant, if there is a possibility that you will be installing cameras in the future, then you should install the white lighting," Southard says.

Also, included in Southard's grant application is a plan to buy 900 "T" locks developed by Terayne Ag Specialties for locking NH3 nurse tanks. To better lock storage tanks, the plan is to buy heavy duty Tanks-A-Lok valve locks that are not susceptible to being cut off using bolt cutters.

Separate from these NH3 security measures is the potential to use GloTell florescent dye tank additive and the anticipated wide-spread use of calcium nitrate tank additive. Calcium nitrate makes the NH3 unusable for methamphetamine production.

Southard says, "If you are a thief, you are going to take the path of least resistance, and I don't think that is going to be an Effingham Equity facility."