

Rural Crime Prevention

Fuel Tank Security

With fuel costs soaring across the nation, securing your farm fueling equipment becomes very important. The theft of fuel is one of the most common types of theft on farms. Consequently, the financial losses to farmers have increased significantly.

Locking your tanks

The first step in preventing fuel theft is to lock your fuel tank. While a determined thief can use bolt cutter, a good strong steel padlock and chain can prevent a theft. Many people make the mistake of putting a \$2 padlock on a \$1000 fuel tank. The key to the lock should not be removable unless the padlock is closed. Ideally the fuel tank cut-off valve should be locked rather than the hose and nozzle. If there is an electrically controlled pump on the tank, make sure the control switch is located in a locked building or in the house, and turn the electricity off when the fuel tank is not in use.

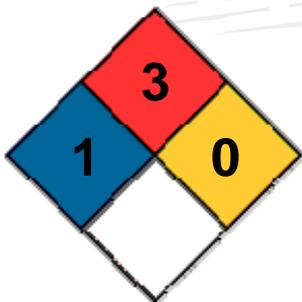


Location of your fuel tank

Fuel theft can be reduced by properly locating fuel storage tanks. Often the primary consideration for location of the fuel tanks is convenience. This is important, but what is convenient for the farmer may be equally convenient for the thief. If the tank is located above ground, an ideal placement would be where the tank is visible from the house, but concealed from the road. Don't locate them behind sheds or silos. The further the tank is from the road the better. Most thieves will think twice about stealing when they do not have an easy escape route.

Keep the area around the pumps or tanks clear of equipment and other obstructions. Do not provide the thieves with cover and concealment and make stealing fuel easier for them.

If there is more than one tank, they can be clustered in the same area. This will simplify observation and make it easier to fence or put alarms on the tanks if it becomes necessary.



If there are diesel and gasoline tanks, use a color coded system to identify its contents, rather than labeling them. You can use the National Fire Protection Association signs to warn of the hazards, they just identify the hazard, not the contents. Make it as difficult as possible for the thief to identify a target.

On large farms, where tanks are needed to serve isolated areas of the property, it is important to ensure that they are kept locked and located out of sight of a public road. It is a good idea to only fill these tanks over the time they will be in use, such as planting and harvesting.

Likewise mobile, tanks used to service farm machinery over busy periods also need to be locked and stored out of sight when not in use. Ideally, these tanks should be returned to the main storage area daily.

Security

- Close and lock valves on all on-ground and overhead tanks when not in use.
- Turn off power to the pumps.
- Keep track of fuel purchases. Dip your tanks daily and monitor your fuel usage so that you will know if there is any unexplained loss of fuel. Install a flow meter to supervise fuel use.
- Keep a book at the tank for each user to record fuel usage for various vehicles and machinery.
- It is a good idea to fence around your fuel tanks. Consider locating tanks close to an outbuilding in which tools and other valuable equipment are stored, and then erect a security fence around the entire area. Gates should be locked with good quality padlocks and chain.

Lighting

- Security lights if properly installed can provide excellent low cost security for fuel tanks located within the farmyard area. To be effective, lights should be placed so that they illuminate the wider area between the house and the tanks.
- Avoid placing lights so they shine directly on the tank. This will cause the tank to be silhouetted and stand out to a passerby if your house is located close to a road.
- Also ensure lights do not point directly toward the house. This causes a blinding effect and makes observation of the tank difficult. A soft light is recommended. A bright light provides too sharp a contrast to allow one to see into the surrounding area.
- Lights can be linked to a sensor, illuminating only when the presence of physical movement in the area or changes of light; or coming on and staying on through the night.

What to do if you experience a theft

- Notify the police. Many farmers fail to report fuel theft because it is difficult to say exactly how much fuel has been stolen. However, the police would prefer to know about these crimes in case there is a pattern of theft in your county. The more information they have, the better equipped they are.
- Notify your fuel supplier. Ask them to notify you exactly when and where your tanks are refilled.



**For More Information:
Contact your local Sheriffs Department
or,
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