

Rural Crime Prevention

Farm Machinery Theft

The theft of farm machinery causes huge personal and financial losses for farmers. Tractors, plows, augers, generators, welders, pick-ups or other trucks, and things like quad runners are attractive targets for thieves. The theft of machinery parts, such as lights, batteries, and radios from tractors is a problem for many farmers.

The costs are high for farmers when replacing stolen equipment. If the theft occurs during critical periods of planting and harvesting, loss of productivity can compound the total financial loss.

What you can do

There are some things you can do to reduce the opportunity for theft. Although several of the suggestions seem pretty drastic and time consuming, they are worth while if a theft is prevented. You are the best judge of what is worth spending your time and trouble on in your particular situation.

Protecting farm equipment

It is sometimes necessary to leave equipment in a field overnight. If it is possible, park machinery out of sight of public roads, behind trees or a hill. The proximity to roads increases the probability of theft or vandalism. If possible, position equipment so it can be seen from the farm house, or alternatively, park it near a neighbor's house.

- Never leave the keys in the machinery.
- The doors of the machinery should be locked if possible.
- To prevent theft of radios from machinery, try to have radios installed that only operate with a security code or have a removable face plate. Do not hide the code or face plate on the equipment, take them with you.
- When there is a breakdown, return the equipment to your main farm yard area if possible. Too often farmers attempt to repair the machinery in the field and leave it unattended while obtaining replacement parts, only to return and find other parts missing.
- Always know where your equipment is located on the farm.



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- Try to secure or immobilize vehicles or equipment when not in use. Machinery left in the field overnight or longer should be disabled by removing the distributor cap or battery. Machinery stored outside or in remote sheds and only used during certain times of the year should also be disabled when not in use.
- You can chain equipment together or to a tree or other strongly anchored object. Vehicle and equipment steering wheels can be chained so that the vehicle can not be turned in any direction.
- Where possible, large farm machinery not in use should be stored in a secured shed, preferably in sight of the farm house, or parked together in a highly visible area.
- Build a fenced enclosure that you can padlock shut for heavier equipment that cannot be secured sheds.
- Ensure all machinery and pieces of equipment are marked with an identification mark (*as shown in the brochure on identification of farm equipment*). Maintain an inventory with the description, serial number, chassis number, and model numbers of your equipment.
- Photograph and video tape machinery and valuable items of equipment – store them in a safe place with the inventory.
- Use lockable fuel caps.
- Secure tools and tool boxes.
- Stolen goods need a ready market. **Be wary of offers that are too good to be true – they usually are!** Report all suspicious activity to the police.



If you are reporting a crime in progress, dial 911. Stay on the line and follow the instructions from the 911 operator.

**For More Information:
Contact your local Sheriffs Department
or,
Washington State Department of Agriculture
(360) 902 - 1800**



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