

## **Pesticide Security for PCOs**

“Understand that your employees are your first line of defense...”

In the past several months, most of you reading this article received one or more letters from the Division of Regulatory and Public Services on pesticide security. You likely also received similar information from your pesticide and equipment distributors and manufacturers and others. Is the theft and use of your pesticides by terrorists really very likely? No, of course not. But *could* it happen? Yes. Aside from this possibility, are there other security issues related to your pesticides? Absolutely. No matter how you look at it, pesticide security is an issue you should examine and take action on.

Mention of the word security quickly brings to mind a number of physical measures to protect your pesticides. Today, three months past September 11, 2001, I suspect that there are visible changes to many of your operations from what we might have seen before that incredible day. A quick tour of your operation might reveal new fencing, more doors closed and new chains and locks on gates and doors. Vehicles are parked in more secure areas and keys are now locked up inside the main office. Pesticide containers may be more neatly stacked and a new, dated, inventory sheet is in the main office near the telephone. You now have at least two emergency contacts with phone numbers posted at the entrance to your pesticide storage site. Also at all telephones are new telephone numbers to call in the event of a break-in or suspected theft of your pesticides or equipment. These emergency numbers are also available for cell phones. And of course, you may have updated or devised a contingency plan. All of this is necessary and good, but we all know that extremely dedicated people can and will overcome almost any security system you might devise if they really want what you have.

Ray Mislock, security chief for DuPont, told me earlier this week that before the shocking events of September 11, the biggest security issue in chemical related and other industries was workplace violence. Most of us are aware that in wholesale and retail a very large loss occurs annually from theft and sabotage by employees. So, for many companies, security plans tend to focus on internal situations. Security is really about people.

When thinking about security, you should of course focus on your own employees. But do this in a positive way! Understand that your employees are your first line of defense in any security system you put in place. Padlocks don't lock themselves, vehicle keys don't secure themselves and current product inventories are rarely self-generating. Commercial pesticide applicators face another challenge; many of your employees spend most of their time with vehicles, equipment, and pesticides on the road and at distant work sites. Security there depends heavily on employee behavior. Remember too that your employees have eyes and ears both at your operation and on the work site and that they need to use them. As with safety, security is everyone's job.

So what kinds of pesticide security actions relate to your employees? First, use careful hiring practices. Hire people that you will be able to trust beyond the doing routines tasks

correctly. Background checks are a must. Have skilled and knowledgeable people use your equipment and materials. All of your employees who handle pesticides should have the necessary training to handle pesticides safely. Limit access to pesticide and equipment storage. Be aware of who has keys and access to pesticide and equipment storage areas and take measures needed to keep unauthorized people away from the storage area. Use related practices that are effective in providing security and safety. No matter where they are, employees should immediately report suspicious persons and conversations to the company. Know your employees.

Further, when you develop or revise your security package, do it as a company. Everyone in your operation needs to understand the issues and their individual roles in pesticide security. Your employees can and should have valuable input into your plan. Employees are a valuable resource; if your employees do not feel they are part of the company and feel that you do not trust them you have no real security.

I have additional information on pesticide and equipment security on my web site. There are fact sheets and other information there on pesticide and chemical and equipment security, including safe pesticide storage. There is guidance for just about any kind and size of pesticide use operation. You'll find this under 'Pesticide Security', under 'Pesticide Issues' at: <http://entweb.clemson.edu/pesticid>

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