

Small Tools; Big Issues



Leading manufacturers and industry bodies have raised the issue of small tool theft.

There has been a rise of nearly two thirds, year to date, of the theft of small tools. This is in sharp contrast to the progress made with larger plant theft, with the latest Plant & Agricultural National Intelligence Unit (PANIU) report stating that overall machinery theft is down by 57% since its peak in 2010.

With the creation of the Construction & Agricultural Equipment Security and Registration scheme (CESAR) and Thatcham's 5* security assessment rating, over the past seven years, over £13.3m of large stolen plant and machinery equipment has been recovered. These improvements, such as a machinery theft database, a dedicated police unit, along with marking schemes, are clearly having an impact, and the attention is now turning to smaller tools and equipment.

Smaller tools are being stolen in a manner of ways: from break-ins and opportunistic thefts to fraudulent hires, whereby equipment is being hired under false information and not returned. Because smaller items are not marked, there is less of a deterrent to take them. This is added to the fact that they are easily saleable on the open market on auction and classifieds websites.

Costly issue

Equipment theft is a costly issue. Not only is there the cost of replacing the equipment, but the time taken away from business to do so. If they were stolen from a vehicle, there is also the time spent off the road to repair any damages that may have occurred. Thieves are targeting equipment that is easily transportable and that can be easily concealed, such as landscaping equipment, GPS systems and machinery attachments, and trades that typically store their tools in vehicles, such as electricians and plumbers.

Hire companies and site managers are finding it increasingly harder to protect this vulnerable equipment from theft and also to recover the equipment if it is found. Unless it is marked, there is no way of returning it to the owner.

Industry bodies, such as PANIU and the Combined Industry Theft Solutions (CITS) are looking at ways to respond to this increase in crime. One solution being developed is Micro-CESAR, an anti-theft system for small tools and equipment. CITS have also produced a Code of Practice to assist the industry in undertaking a theft risk assessment for equipment. Ensuring smaller equipment is locked away or secured will help keep the criminals at bay.

Measures that can be taken to help prevent losses:

- Never leave keys in the vehicle with the engine running or leave spare keys in the vehicle
- Always close windows and lock doors when the vehicle is unattended
- Never leave items on view as this may encourage opportunistic theft
- Whenever possible, avoid leaving tools or equipment in the vehicle overnight. If unavoidable, ensure they are stored in a steel container or van vaults screwed into the van
- Ensure records of plant, equipment and power tools are held and that these include make, model, and serial or identification numbers, together with details of security marking
- Temporary or portable intruder alarms can be used to protect stores for tools, equipment or materials and act as a deterrent
- When hiring out equipment, always seek two forms of ID, ensuring one of these is a photo ID and one contains a current address
- When looking into hiring equipment, ask what security devices have been fitted. It may influence your choice of supplier
- For larger equipment, consider joining CESAR, which allows plant owners and users to register equipment on a central database and increase plant security with a system of security marking and identification technologies

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