

IMPROVING YOUR DEALERSHIP SECURITY

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Abstract

Dealership security is a critical component of our nation's overall security initiative. It is clearly evident from the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that agricultural products can be used for terrorist activities. This event put the agricultural industry in the spotlight and required an appropriate response. Retail dealerships are not immune to terrorist activities, including theft, although many are located in remote areas of the country. The agricultural industry is responding through the efforts of many organizations including CropLife America, The Fertilizer Institute, Agricultural Retailers Association, individual state associations, and federal and state agencies.

The agricultural industry was addressing security issues prior to September 11 (9/11). This is primarily due to the theft of anhydrous ammonia for the manufacture of methamphetamine. Dealerships were taking steps to improve security for their respective facilities and customers. After 9/11, this heightened awareness was compounded by the fact that other agricultural products could potentially be used for terrorist activities. Fortunately, dealerships were offered assistance from many sources. These sources included agencies such as the state department of agriculture, state associations, EPA, DOT, and industry publications. A systemic approach to security was being developed through the combined efforts of many organizations.

To assist dealerships with a systematic process to deal with security issues, the Agribusiness Security Working Group² is developing a Security Vulnerability Assessment (SVA) tool. This tool should be available by February or March of 2003. Dealerships can use the SVA to bolster security measures at their respective facilities. Components of the SVA include 1) forming a SVA team, 2) gathering information about the facility, 3) conducting a physical inspection of the facility to determine security concerns and note possible security improvements, 4) a second team meeting to review inspection results, determine security improvements and prioritize implementation, and 5) the development of a security review and implementation report. Details for these various components will be available upon completion of the SVA. At that time the SVA will be distributed through numerous industry organizations.

There are numerous security principles and guidelines that can be implemented by dealerships. Many of these principles and guidelines can be found in the Guidelines To Help Ensure A Secure Agribusiness that was produced by the Agribusiness Security Working Group. [This document is available through the organizations involved in the development of this document.] Due to the variability found in each dealership, managers should apply the appropriate security principles applicable to their facility. The document covers security measures in such areas as facility security practices, customer transaction practices, special security measures, partnering with customers, dealing with the media, and a facility closing checklist. Key security topics are listed below.

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- Suggested facility security practices: awareness, access, alarms, barriers, community, inventory control, law enforcement, lighting, locks, signage, surveillance, training, vendors, and visibility.
- Suggested customer transaction practices: awareness and sales transactions.
- Suggested special security measures: alarms, awareness, law enforcement, locks for tanks, and visibility.
- Suggestions for partnering with your customers on security and safety: law enforcement.
- Tips for dealing with the media in an emergency situation: contact, coordinate, designate, remember, prepare, what you say, and how you say it.
- Suggested retail facility closing checklist.

The key to securing your dealership is commitment. In the post 9/11 era, it is the responsibility of all Americans to prioritize security. Dealerships will be required to conduct a vulnerability assessment and implement security updates. Fortunately for the agricultural industry, many local, state, and national organizations are providing security resources for retail dealerships. Included in these resources will be a Security Vulnerability Assessment tool developed by the Agribusiness Security Working Group. In addition to the SVA tool, security resources are available through sources on the Internet as listed below. Agricultural retail dealerships must do their part to keep America secure.

Resources

Site Security Guidelines for the U.S. Chemical Industry & Transportation Security Guidelines for the U.S. Chemical Industry, www.americanchemistry.com.

Terrorism Threat Vulnerability Self Assessment Tool, www.ncagr.com/industry_self-assessment.doc.

United States Department of Agriculture, www.usda.gov.

Food and Drug Administration, www.fda.gov.

Association of Emergency Managers, www.iaem.com.

Department of Homeland Security, www.whitehouse.gov/deptofhomeland/.

References

Agricultural Retailers Association, CropLife America, and The Fertilizer Institute. 2002. Guidelines to Help Ensure a Secure Agribusiness.