Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Farm Security - "Treat it Seriously"

Security for Plant Agriculture: On-Farm Assessment and Security Practices

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Acts of terrorism have heightened our awareness of the need for increased personal and farm security. The greatest security risk to farms, greenhouses and nurseries where plants are grown is the unauthorized access to farm chemicals and application equipment. We know that pesticides should be stored away from children. In addition, pesticides should be secure from trespassers, vandals, and thieves who may inadvertently, or intentionally, use these chemicals to harm themselves, other people, crop or non-crop lands, and the environment. Take responsibility for the safety of yourself, your family and employees, and your community. Prepare your farm to withstand the pressure of "unauthorized activity."

The assessment below is designed to help you identify security issues on your farm with an emphasis on chemical safety, but also deals with other issues that may improve safety for you and your family. If you need additional information on implementing security measures, contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension agent.

Farm Security Assessment

1) **Are crop protection chemicals stored in a secure, locked area?**

2) **Do you have an up-to-date inventory of all products in storage? Do you modify the inventory as products are used?**

   Store your inventory records -- or a duplicate -- outside the storage area. Have at least one paper copy in case the power is out and you need the list in an emergency.

3) **Do you know where each item is shelved/ stored?**

   Useful records include product name, active ingredient, date of purchase, and date and volume stored. You may also wish to include a floor plan indicating where stored materials are located. Keep inventory low. Inventory management can help limit the amount of potentially hazardous pesticides stored on site, reducing the risks of accidental or intentional release or theft. It is also a good waste minimization tool.

4) **Are storage areas neat and well organized? If not, are you sure that you can detect evidence of theft or tampering?**

5) **Is the pesticide storage room locked when unattended?**

6) **Can you tell if there has been an unauthorized entry to the pesticide storage room?**

   Broken lights or dark areas that are usually lit. Doors that are open, damaged, or don't lock properly. Broken windows. Reconcile inventory records with actual products in storage. Report and investigate inconsistencies. Notify law enforcement authorities of any unresolved problems.

7) **Are bulk storage tanks protected with secondary containment?**

8) **Are bulk storage tanks equipped with locks?**

   Reduce potential for siphoning from or stealing filled tanks and mini-bulk equipment.

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9) **Are chemical storage areas properly marked? Do signs designating chemical storage areas include emergency contact information? Minimum information should include name and telephone number(s) of the emergency contact person.**

10) **Do you secure the perimeter of restricted areas (ex. pesticide/fertilizer storage) using fencing?**

Additional deterrents include dogs and electronic security systems. Locate pesticide storage areas in sites that are within your view and that of family members and farm workers…but not in an area that can be seen by passers-by.

11) **Do you keep restricted areas locked when not in use?**

Select industrial grade locksets and other door hardware. Remember to change keys or key codes when employees leave…or swap padlocks from different areas when an employee leaves or is terminated.

12) **Have you minimized the number of entrances to restricted areas on the farm?**

13) **Have you secured the sources of your farm's and/or home's fresh water supplies?**

14) **Do you have an emergency response plan for accidents or incidents on your farm?**

Investigate all information regarding an intrusion or suspicious activity immediately. Call the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

15) **Are employees and family members aware of and trained in response procedures?**

Effective advance emergency response procedures can be critical, helping ensure that family members and employees understand how to respond and who to contact in the case of an emergency. Aside from accidents, such plans must also consider vandalism, bomb threats, and potential terrorist activity. Establish contact with local law enforcement and fire authorities before there is an emergency! Give the local emergency services coordinator or fire chief a tour of your farm and/or chemical storage area. Train employees and supervisors to recognize and immediately report suspicious activity, unauthorized entry, or areas that may be vulnerable to tampering or intrusion. Notify employees of contact people, back-up contacts, and procedures to report suspicious activity. Post on-farm, fire, law enforcement, and other emergency response telephone numbers in central locations and by each telephone. Post telephone numbers for the nearest poison control center and health professional contacts.

What constitutes suspicious activity?

Employees:

- Staying unusually late after the end of a shift.
- Arriving unusually early.
- Accessing or attempting to access files, information, or areas of the farm outside of their area of responsibility.
- Removing documents from the facility.
- Asking questions on sensitive subjects.
- Bringing cameras to work.

General:

- Signs of tampering with equipment or facilities.
- Suspicious materials or devices.
- Misplaced equipment.

16) **Do you screen employees (including seasonal, temporary, and contract) and volunteers prior to hiring or accepting services?**

Effective hiring and labor relations policies are important to obtain and retain good employees who will support and follow safety precautions. For example, the hiring process should ensure that pesticide handlers have all requisite training necessary to handle pesticides safely. Background checks of staff with access to secure areas, particularly those areas where pesticides may be stored, are also necessary. Require all applicants to fill out a written job application including references from previous employment. Conduct thorough background checks to verify previous employment references, addresses, phone numbers, qualifications, and employee demeanor.

Check regulations before performing vehicle checks or criminal background checks. Check immigration status with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Obtain permission to perform drug and alcohol testing prior to and

during employment. Have a 30-90 day probationary period. Place new employees on the day shift. Have zero tolerance for workplace violence or theft.

17) Is the parking area for farm vehicles, including application equipment, secured against unauthorized access?

Keep parking areas outside of the perimeter fencing of -- or at least away from -- sensitive areas (storage areas for water, feed, or hazardous materials.) Lock all vehicles when not in use, and keep the keys in a secure area. Never leave ignition keys with equipment. Monitor vehicles for inappropriate contents or unauthorized/ unusual activity. Park them away from main roads and farm property access points. Park them in areas where they will be in view of normal on-farm traffic.

18) Can you limit farm entry to one gated road? If 'yes,' do you keep the gate locked?

19) Do you have a system to check-in / check-out all non-essential or non-routine, known visitors?

Consider using a sign-in sheet. Record names, addresses, phone numbers, reason for visit, and facilities entered for each visitor.

20) Do you avoid 'advertising' when you'll be on vacation or when your farm and its buildings will be vacant?

21) Have you minimized the number and size of places where people can easily hide within and around the farm?

Trim trees and shrubs so that they do not block lighting, provide concealment to criminals, or block visibility of security patrols.

22) Are areas surrounding and within farm buildings well lit?

23) Do you have back-up lighting for emergencies?

24) Do you use electronic sensors around sensitive areas during times when no one should be working in these sites?

25) Do you have regular but unpredictable security patrols by employees, security guards, or local law enforcement?

26) Are you or a trusted person in charge of security issues?

Designate one person to oversee security issues.

Document all security issues and investigations.

27) Do you inspect all hazardous materials shipped directly to your farm on receipt and verify authenticity with packing slip and supplier as needed?

Purchase hazardous materials from known, licensed, or permitted suppliers.

28) Do you maintain a secure, locked storage area for crop seed? Are procedures in place to inventory and store seed of genetically modified crops, and to segregate this seed from standard crop seed?

29) Are procedures in place to segregate seed harvested from genetically modified crops from that harvested from standard crops? Are grain storage bins used for this purpose clearly identified and secured?

30) Do you scout regularly for the development of unusual crop symptoms or other damage to non-crop plants?

In addition to overall field scouting, routinely check farm perimeters and access points for evidence of intentional damage to crops or non-crop plants

31) Do you maintain a current and comprehensive list of specialists to contact for assistance in diagnosing crop problems?

32) Are procedures in place to insure computer security and the continuity and integrity of computer-based farm records?

Restrict access to computers and adhere to password and data backup procedures. Establish procedures for power loss. Protect data with reliable anti-virus software. Secure computer work areas, and computers within these areas. Protect wiring from environmental or intentional damage.