

Toolbox Talk #4.5 – Reducing Tool Theft



Protecting Handheld Power Tools or Technical Instruments

Outline

On agricultural and rural worksites, handheld power tools, specialised instruments, and small equipment are frequently transferred between tasks and operators. Items such as grinders, steel saws, testers, and gauges play essential roles ensuring operational accuracy and efficiency throughout daily activities.

With the advent of new technologies on farms, traditional skills and methods are increasingly being replaced by digital solutions. Tools such as bolt croppers are supplanted by steel saws, while mechanical devices are exchanged for their digital counterparts. Even notebooks are being substituted with tablets or smart gauges, resulting not only in the loss of the physical tool but also the associated data stored within the device.

It is also important to recognise that items intended for work, such as steel saws, can present security risks if stolen, underscoring the need for responsible handling and adherence to workplace security protocols.

Why This Matters:

Tool theft disrupts farm operations, delays tasks, and may force unsafe substitutions that increase the risk of injury or death. The consequence of stolen tools adds administrative burden with police reports, insurance claims, and sourcing replacements, all of which increase input costs. Proportionate and affordable protections can help reduce the crime risk.



Let's Talk About It:

- Can we list the tools or instruments that are critical to our farm activities?
- How do we safeguard these tools when not in use?
- If you were a thief, how would you steal this critical equipment?
- What would you do differently to protect this critical equipment if you owned it?

Quick Wins:

- 01 ● Place professional battery-power tools and instruments out of sight and in a secure cabinet within a secure building when not in use.
- 02 ● Increase the level of protection on tools and equipment that might be used by an offender to attack your vehicles or farmyard, i.e., steel saws, portable hand-grinder or drill, nail-guns, a ladder, a crowbar, electric arc welding torch, etc.
- 03 ● Activate the manufacturer's protective security features, i.e., access codes.
- 04 ● Uniquely marked your hand-held power tools or specialist equipment with forensic DNA solutions, indelible ink, engraving, or steel punching
- 05 ● Recorded a digital image of your equipment and tools including uniquely identifying marks, damage, or manufacturer's serial numbers.
- 06 ● Monitor tool stores with cameras or intruder detection sensors that activate motion-sensitive lights.
- 07 ● Display signs highlighting the use of cameras, intruder alarms, and forensic DNA solutions on the entrances to workshops or equipment stores.
- 08 ● Download critical data to secondary device (cloud or data storage device) to minimise the impact if the instrument or gauge is stolen.

KEEP YOUR TOOLS SAFE & SECURE



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What does 'good' look like:

- 01 Critical tools, instruments, and devices are locked in cabinets, inside secure buildings, and monitored.
- 02 The property is uniquely marked, registered, and insured with identifying information and digital imagery listed in the farm asset register.



- 03 A business continuity plan is available to coordinate a response that includes identifying a safe substitute tool, notifying the local police, and sharing the loss via online community forums.



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