



## Vandalism of Logging Equipment

Dear Chris,

A few years ago in Blue Hill, Maine, vandals caused \$16,000 worth of damage to logging equipment. Two skidders that belonged to a private logger had their tires punctured according to a ranger for the Maine Forest Service. The eight flat tires are about six feet in diameter and cost about \$2,000 a piece to replace. Whether they were salvaged or replaced, the loss was expensive. Equally as important though was that the logger was then out of work for days. The time lost when they could have been harvesting timber was as costly.

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To make matters worse, the victim was a local, small-scale logger who harvests trees to sell as timber. I never learned if the culprits were caught.

Overall, cases of outright vandalism to logging equipment are infrequent, but they can be costly. More often, loggers are victims of outright thefts -- batteries, chain saws, hydraulic fluid, and in one rare case, skidder doors. And of course, fuel theft is another problem faced by loggers. Fuel theft can take many forms from just pumping it out of the fuel tank, to thieves cutting the fuel line and draining the fuel from the tank. If the thief doesn't have enough containers to hold all the fuel, the rest of it just drains onto the ground. This creates an environmental cleanup issue as well as the fuel loss, equipment repairs and lost productivity. When equipment is just sitting there in a remote location with no one around the opportunity can be a real temptation.

So, let's go ahead and review the various methods of combating the problem.

And if you have the time check out our newly redesigned website! <http://www.dendroresourcemgt.com/>.

Warmly,  
Aaron





## Prevention by Changing Perceptions

Loggers routinely operate in remote locations that are difficult to monitor, giving potential thieves the perception that the theft is low risk. To prevent problems up front, loggers should work to change that perception.

Three overall strategies have been found to do an excellent job of changing perception:

1. One way to do that is to develop, implement and communicate to all employees a security plan which identifies the potential for breaches and includes a wide variety of actions to attempt to either deter the theft in the first place or discover a breach as soon as possible to minimize losses. Having a formal discussion with employees can communicate the anti-theft message directly to a common source of equipment theft and vandalism, employees. The plan should be written to address the unique characteristics of that operation.
2. Companies should seriously consider implementing a morning inspection routine prior to starting operations. This will allow your crew to notice things before attempting to start the equipment with no fuel or even no fluids.
3. In addition, companies can install motion-activated surveillance cameras to record all visitors to the site and post signs at the entrance to the job stating that the premises are under surveillance. Well-placed and well-maintained cameras can be critical in investigations. Cameras help would be thieves quickly perceive that there are solid security measures in place. Take care in the installation to prevent the cameras from being stolen!
4. Consider installing motion-activated lights on the job site as well as motion-activated alarms on equipment. Many motion-activated alarms will also send your cell phone a text message or email to alert you of the intrusion. Lights and alarms going off when someone walks onto your job site after hours can be an excellent deterrent.
5. Gates can be installed at the entrance to the logging road to block access and prevent driving to within close proximity of equipment. Use gates when possible or use barriers of cut trees to block roads. Gates can also increase the potential of detection when a passer-by spots a lone vehicle that parked at the gate.
6. Finally, lock things up. Securely lock equipment cab doors and provide locks for service access doors, fuel tanks and master switches. When possible, leave equipment near homes of friendly neighbors who are willing to observe the machines periodically. Avoid "clumping equipment" together for many reasons, but it is easier to spot (or for a camera to spot) a person approaching one piece of equipment rather than one person standing in the middle of three pieces of equipment.
7. In areas known to be "trouble spots" consider hiring a local person to patrol the area at night (preferably a retired or off-duty law enforcement officer). If practical, notify the local

sheriff's office, since they may be able to patrol the area more often if they know to expect trouble. They may even use the situation to increase surveillance, hoping to catch a habitual offender in the act of committing a crime.

8. Camp out on the site and be prepared.

9. Have bogus signs printed, stating that the area is under surveillance by "XYZ Security Services" and post signs in obvious areas. (Buy cheap signs, since they will be stolen or vandalized!)

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**Some additional recommendations are given below specifically to prevent fuel theft:**

- In the case of a fuel trailer, consider pulling it out of the woods during off hours. If that is not feasible, then remove the pumping mechanism and secure the trailer to a stationary object.
- Maintain a record of all the gallons pumped from the tank. This will not only provide an accurate record of fuel usage by equipment/individuals but it will also serve as a record that can be utilized by law enforcement/insurance companies should a theft occur.
- To prevent fuel lines being cut, harden the target by limiting access to engine compartments, when possible. If that is not an option, replace the existing fuel lines with steel braided fuel lines.
- To prevent siphoning of fuel, install an anti-siphon screen in the neck of each tank. This prevents hoses from being inserted into the tank.



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