

National Equipment Register Equipment Theft Advisory

Commercial Mower Thefts

June, 2009

NER and several commercial mower manufacturers have broadcast information on the plague of commercial mower thefts in order to raise awareness of this problem, both among the industry and Law Enforcement. Despite these efforts, thieves continue to strike, increasingly with more sophisticated techniques and more brazen conduct. Clearly organized criminal elements are involved in this trend.



NER strongly encourages any afterhours activity at dealerships to be reported to local police immediately, especially vehicles entering or exiting the facilities.

DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL 911

Law Enforcement must be on the alert that any afterhours activity at these facilities is potentially criminal in nature- please inform patrol personnel of this recurrent trend.

Dealers and Distributors must be conscious of the likelihood of being targeted and no longer assume that theft is an isolated occurrence. In taking action to prevent and deter thefts keep in mind:

- Offenders have used dealer trucks and trailers to remove machines.
- Offenders brought components to operate machines, and were prepared to assemble and make operable machines that were still crated.
- Offenders used facility fork lifts and loaders to load crated machines.
- Offenders were not deterred by gates or fences, nor chains and cables securing machines.
- After the fact neighboring businesses have reported seeing activity at the facility but assumed it was legitimate.
- Victimized businesses recalled that vehicles parked in the area for extended periods, or drove through the yards prior to thefts. Local Law Enforcement was not advised as the businesses did not recognize the vehicles as suspicious until after the burglaries occurred.
- Victimized businesses reported that they had several false burglar alarms and/or broken windows prior to the burglaries.

Consistently, security videos and evidence at the scenes indicate the offenders are comfortable spending a significant period of time committing the burglaries, and apparently have little concern over detection. The thieves arrive with extensive tools, parts, batteries and fuel in order to operate the machines. Having cased the property extensively, they also are prepared to defeat perimeter

fences, cables and even earthen barriers. Thieves were inside a dealer yard in Florida for nearly three hours assembling and driving out machines. At another location, thieves arrived with a wooden bridge made specifically for a ditch behind the dealership which allowed them to remove machines to an unsecured neighboring parking lot. At a location in Alabama, thieves had poles to push cameras out of position. Often offenders vehicles are not visible on camera, indicating they have a good knowledge of where cameras are located.

All of this indicates the offenders have spent time casing the businesses and preparing for the burglary. They may have entered the yards on multiple occasions to test security responses and familiarize themselves with the facility prior to the burglary.

NER emphasizes that dealers must communicate with Law Enforcement when any suspicious activity occurs. Provide descriptions, plate numbers and if possible pictures of any suspicious vehicles. Report any minor break ins or vandalism, and be sure local Law Enforcement understands the scope of these crimes regionally. Law Enforcement can only respond to problems they are aware of- if you are not communicating a need for support, they will not know there is a need for support.

Law Enforcement nation wide are encouraged to educate Patrol and Dispatch personnel of this problem, so that often overlooked incidents can be recognized in the context of this larger problem. Currently equipment dealerships may not be a high priority for patrol personnel. Based on this trend, NER encourages patrol commanders to re-evaluate this and recognize equipment dealerships and rental facilities as likely targeted locations.

Offender Information:

Offender descriptions

- Males and females, often the females appear to be look-outs and drivers
- White, Hispanic and Black
- Generally obscuring identity with hooded sweatshirts
- Foot prints at the scenes sometimes were described as notably small

Vehicle Descriptions

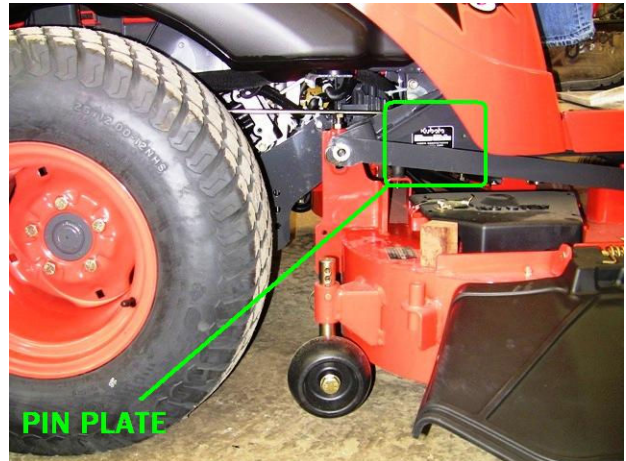
- Newer Maroon ½ ton Dodge regular cab with Mossy Oak rear window shade seen casing Florida dealers. Side window tint extremely dark.
- Dually Crew Cab Chevrolet Pick-up, possibly dark red with light colored tool box pulling a large enclosed trailer, dark color with graphics on the side.
- U- haul brand enclosed 26' truck pulling a black flatbed trail with large folding wood decked ramp.

Machine Identification for Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement- contact NICB for identification assistance and access to NER's theft and ownership databases- **800-447-6282**. NER encourages Law Enforcement to confirm the status of any machine with the owner- a negative hit on NCIC cannot confirm the machine is NOT STOLEN.

Commercial Mower Identification: Machine PIN or Serial Number is often difficult to see below the operator's station on the machine's frame, or in the engine area. There are two more obvious "Serial Numbers" which do not identify the machine; the mower deck serial number and the roll bar (ROPS) serial number, either of which are easily mistaken for the machine PIN.

Kubota Mowers



Special thanks to Sound Tractor, Everett, WA for machine images and assistance
PIN Decal or Plate below operator's platform, may be obscured by mower elevation devices

John Deere Mowers



PIN Plate or Decal on John Deere Zero Turn Mowers may be to the rear of the drive tires, or in the engine area. As with Kubota's, there is a more prominent Serial Number Plate on the mower deck which is not a machine identifier

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