

Secure Pesticide Storage: Security Against Terrorist Threats¹

Frederick M. Fishel²

Many farmers and managers of pesticide storage facilities had concerns about biosecurity and agroterrorism even before the Oklahoma City bombing and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. Businesses that manufacture, reformulate, sell, distribute, transport, store, or apply pesticides have long known the mitigation steps for safety of their workers, customers, and communities. In today's age, however, these efforts may not necessarily be enough.

Even though security steps appear to be routine, they are critical to the safety of a business, facility, and community. Without effective security measures, a business dealing with pesticides may be vulnerable to both internal and external threats. Buildings, machinery, stored pesticides, and business information are all included in these threats. Protection of mobile pesticide application equipment, particularly aerial application equipment, should be taken into account as well.

Shortly following the events of 9/11, the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) asked farmers to identify specific threats posed by terrorists. A few selected responses included:

- How likely do you think it is that an agricultural, food, or water bioterrorist attack will take place somewhere in the US?
 - Likely to very likely: 81%

- Unlikely to very unlikely: 19%
- Do you feel that you are properly prepared for agroterrorism or some other security-based event against your operation?
 - Yes: 14%
 - No: 51%
 - Don't know: 35%
- If you feel your operation is at risk to terrorist activity, which aspects do you think are at greatest risk? Check all that apply.
 - Contamination of water: 45%
 - Loss of livestock or other animal production: 44%
 - Loss of income due to impact on commodity markets: 41%
 - Contamination of animal or crop production: 31%
 - Contamination of feed: 29%

Terrorists are unlike common criminals whose prime motivation is monetary gain. Terrorists have idealistic or political goals and will attempt to accomplish their mission with no fear of being caught. Their actions are carefully planned and coordinated, and attempted by skilled and maybe armed individuals. Security precautions designed to deter theft will likely fail against terrorists.

1. This document is PI-42, one of a series of the Agronomy Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 2005. Revised February 2014 and March 2017. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Frederick M. Fishel, professor, Agronomy Department, and director, Pesticide Information Office; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

Questions to Ask of Your Establishment to Assess Risks

- What is the threat (theft, sabotage, attack)?
- How might illegal activities be carried out?
- Is the threat internal or external?
- Are containers of hazardous substances easily accessible?
- Is there the potential for siphoning from large storage tanks?
- Are unauthorized people allowed on the premises?
- Are unauthorized people escorted while on the property and do they sign in and out?
- Are background checks performed on employees?
- Are employees aware of the security risks associated with the storage of agrichemicals and other hazardous substances?
- Is there a potential for theft of electronic information that could result in security breaches?

Recommended Considerations in Evaluating Pesticide Security

- Securing buildings, manufacturing facilities, storage areas and surrounding property: It is fundamental, but preventing intrusion can include elements such as fencing or other barriers, lighting, locks, detection systems, signage, alarms, cameras, and trained guards.
- Securing pesticide application equipment and vehicles: Consider using an authorization process for persons who have access to such equipment before their use.
- Aerial application equipment: The FBI has requested that aerial applicators be vigilant to any suspicious activity relevant to the use of, training in, or acquisition of dangerous chemicals and their application. Such activity includes, but is not limited to, threats, unusual purchases, suspicious behavior, and unusual contacts with the public.
- Protection of confidential information: As businesses have grown more reliant on computers and communication technology, the need to secure these systems has grown. Efforts to include contingency planning for power losses, monitoring access ports, adherence to password and backup procedures, and maintaining access for authorized personnel only should be taken into account.
- Developing procedures and policies that support security needs: Even the best hardware and staffing budgets are

only as effective as the procedures and policies that control their use.

- Effective hiring and labor relations 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 who have access to secure areas, particularly those areas where pesticides may be stored, are also necessary.
- Inventory management policies can help limit the amount of potentially hazardous pesticides stored on site, reducing the risks of accidental or intentional release or theft.
- Effective advance emergency response procedures can be critical. Business officials and employees need to have an understanding of how to respond and whom to contact in the case of an emergency.
- Establish a procedure for locking up the facility at the close of the business day.

Suspicious Individuals

Maintain awareness of anyone demonstrating suspicious behavior, including those who:

- Seem unfamiliar with agriculture or agrichemicals. This can usually be determined by everyday conversation with someone who enters the business.
- Seem to be “hanging out.” These could be individuals who appear to be scoping the facility out.
- Insist on paying cash only, especially for large purchases.
- Wish to purchase only the most toxic materials.
- Refuse to take delivery.
- Are unwilling to present positive identification or license credentials.
- Seem anxious or uneasy when asked questions regarding their intent.

Also, remember to:

- Ask for proof of licensure when a customer is purchasing a Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP).
- Ask for picture identification to confirm identities.
- Be aware of personal identity theft for customers and employees. Examine all forms of identification carefully.
- Keep all required documentation for RUP purchases.

- Require a signature for product deliveries, and deliver them only to legitimate recipients.
- Avoid unguarded and unlit areas where the possibility of theft increases.
- Advise all customers regarding potentials for theft and use of agrichemicals as weapons of terror.

Telephone Contacts if You Suspect Suspicious Activity

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

- Bureau of Inspection and Incident Response: (850) 617-7996
- Law Enforcement Division: 1-800-342-5869

Florida Department of Law Enforcement Security Hotline:
1-800-342-0820

FBI

- Jacksonville: (904) 721-1211
- Miami: (305) 944-9101
- Tampa: (813) 273-4566

Additional Online Sources of Information

American Chemistry Council: <https://www.americanchemistry.com/default.aspx>

Department of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov

Extension Disaster Education Network: <http://eden.lsu.edu/Pages/default.aspx>

US Department of Agriculture: www.usda.gov

US Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov