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CONSTRUCTION NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2013

Construction Equipment Thefts Spike in Summer: Is Your Site Protected?

Over the summer period law enforcement will see a spike in thefts at construction sites and from tradies' utes and vans, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau. Besides equipment, thieves typically target building materials and vehicles.

To better protect your construction site, here's what you can do to help prevent equipment and building material theft;

- **Check fencing** – Do regular checks around the perimeter of your site and inspect the fencing. Make sure there are no easy ways for outsiders to enter.
- **Consider security cameras** – Mobile temporary camera surveillance systems are cost effective and can help keep an eye on your construction site. There are a range of systems available, including wireless internet cameras that need no AC power or phone lines.
- **Improve lighting during night hours** – Thefts typically happen during the evening hours under the cloak of darkness. Good lighting can help keep your site visible during the night so thieves have nowhere to hide.
- **Use hi-security site boxes** – using high security stores, site boxes and security cabinets (*such as Store-Safe products*) they offer an additional level of security for building equipment and materials against theft.
- **Enhance organisation** – Too often organisation is a mess when it comes to tracking keys, equipment and building materials. It's important to keep track of all of the keys to equipment, fences, etc. Also keep tabs on use of equipment and tools on the site.
- **Make it difficult to steal** – With your equipment, make it difficult for thieves to move them. Consider using wheel and sleeve locks. You can also position equipment in a defensive pattern. Cluster heavy equipment around easy to steal vehicles and hardware as a way to prevent thefts.
- **Check the locks** – At the end of the day, have someone inspect the locks to equipment, trailers, buildings, fencing, etc. Leaving something unlocked makes it too easy for thefts to happen.

Following these tips will help to better protect your job site. Should something get stolen, immediately contact your local police department.

Tradies, too, should take precautions over the period. **NEVER** leave your tools and equipment stored inside your vehicle cabin over the holiday period. Store them indoors in a secure security cabinet or site box. Don't be fooled by seemingly **cheap** 'strong' tool and ute boxes, **what you pay for is what you get**. Checker-plate is only a design – it does not make the metal any stronger and if your tool box has an external locking mechanism, such as a padlock, it poses no problems to a thief who can easily jemmy open the lid.



Store-Safe boxes and security cabinets

STORE-SAFE: Celebrating 25 years!

It has been 25 years since Store-Safe's founder and Managing Director, Grant Breeze, took his first safe secure tool box from building site to building site around Sydney to get his fledgling company started. Since that time, Store-Safe's distinctive yellow tool boxes, site boxes and ute boxes have become permanent fixtures on tradie's utes, vans and many construction sites around Australia.

To celebrate, we are offering customers a **5% discount** on tool, site and ute boxes **until the end of November 2013.**



These boxes are over 23 years old and still in service

REPORTS FROM TRADIES AND BUILDING SITES TARGETED BY THIEVES.

Signs that the building and construction industries are about to move forward are beginning to appear, especially in government-driven infrastructure projects right around Australia. Thieves, as well, can see the trend with a number of thefts and break-ins around the country. Here's a quick round-up of recent incidents:

MELTON builders have taken to sleeping at their unfinished houses to bring an end to thefts from construction sites, and they are offering up cash rewards to neighbours if they help catch thieves. Electrical wires, copper plumbing fittings, doors, windows, timber, anything and everything is being stolen from building sites. And the snow ball effect is wreaking havoc on the industry and the community.

Tradies and subcontractors are arriving and can't do their jobs, owners are upset their homes are being delayed and thousands of dollars is being added to the cost of a house to cover security measure. Exclusive Homes Melton owner Ted Caruana said it was getting to the point where building a house would no longer be viable. Theft from his building sites in the past 12 months have cost him more than \$70,000 and expensive security measures are being installed to help keep it down.

Simon Agius of Superb Homes Melton agrees saying he has even been sleeping in some houses to ensure nothing is stolen. At his building site in Caroline Springs electrical wiring was stolen from houses three days in a row. Elite Home Constructions owner Michael Vella has caught and chased thieves from his building sites. "They take everything. Wires, copper, timber - it's causing huge delays and it's frustrating," he said.

Melton Police Detective Senior-Sergeant Barry Jenks said there was no doubt the thefts were a huge issue for builders. In the past month police have received many reports of thefts from building sites and display homes, including Plumpton, Caroline Springs and Melton West. Copper wiring, generators and appliances are the items of choice for thieves.



Store-Safe's range of stores and accommodation facilities offer the highest level of protection against the theft of equipment and building materials.

An **ENGADINE (NSW)** tradesman is warning fellow builders of thieves after \$3000 worth of tools was stolen from his vehicle at Wolli Creek. Third year carpentry apprentice, Jacob Moes, 21, parked his Holden Rodeo ute in Levey Street at 6.30pm on September 28 while he went with his family to pick up his sister from Sydney Airport. It took less than one hour for Mr Moes to return to his car but his tools, which were locked up on the back seat, were gone. "They forced and broke the window mechanism to open the door, helping themselves to only my most valuable tools," he said. Mr Moes' car insurance policy only covers personal items but without the tools of trade he cannot complete his carpentry work. "The newest one was only two days old." The incident was reported to Sutherland police and investigations are continuing.

POLICE are warning tradies to safeguard their tools after \$15,000 worth of tools were stolen from vans and utes in Andrews Farm and Elizabeth Vale. The tools were stolen from three vehicles between October 15 and October 17. An Elizabeth Vale man, 37, has been charged with the thefts and will appear in court on November 26. Items stolen included air tools, drill sets, hand tools, grinders, drills and power saws. There have been more than 1620 reports of thefts from vehicles across the northern suburbs in the past 12 months, up 15 per cent on the previous year. Tradies told the News Reviews Messenger they faced an ongoing battle to stop thieves.

Salisbury East refrigeration mechanic Dale Greet, 25, said thieves removed the windows of his van and stole about \$4000 worth of tools on September 14. He has been forced to spend hundreds of dollars on new hand tools while waiting for his insurance claim to be processed. "I parked the van at the front as I always do and woke up to see there were no windows and my heart started pounding," Mr Greet said. "I've had to borrow some of my boss's power tools to get me through and I had to go to Bunnings and buy about \$800 of hand tools that were in my toolbox which was stolen.

"Lucky I have insurance, but it's not the point. It's been pretty hectic and I know I won't get back some of the smaller tools as I haven't kept some of the receipts."

Police have urged tradesmen to lock their vehicles, even when on jobs, and record the serial numbers of their tools to help recover stolen property.

Parafield Gardens roof plumber Scott Weidenbach, 26, chased a suspect down his street after he was woken by a thief trying to steal tools out of his car in October. "He had removed the whole back window by unsealing it all it was just lucky that we caught him in the act and nothing was stolen," Mr Weidenbach said.

Ingle Farm refrigeration mechanic Cameron Pritchard had his van broken into at the front of his home last year. "It was pretty bad, they cleaned it out," Mr Pritchard said. "I got most of the tools back on insurance but it was the inconvenience of it all and I've had to fork out money to upgrade the locks."

POLICE have urged tradies to lock up their tools after a recent spate of thefts in the west of Melbourne.

The warning comes after a number of tool thefts from vehicles in the **Wyndham, Maribyrnong** and **Hobsons Bay** areas. Leading Senior Constable Craig McDonald said thieves have been targeting vans and utes parked in residential streets during the night, stealing tools ranging from hammers to expensive power tools. Leading Sen Const McDonald said there were a number of measures tradespeople could take to avoid their belongings getting stolen. "Always make sure you lock up your van and secure building sites after you've finished for the day – use bigger and more secure locks," he said. "If you've got an alarm fitted to your vehicle, make sure you set it." Police have also advised tradesmen and women to get their tools engraved so they can be easily recognised when thieves attempt to sell them at second-hand shops. Police said they would continue to investigate tool thefts from vehicles in the West and urged anyone with information to contact **Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000**.

Tools, equipment stolen from **Northcote SES**: It seems not even the SES is safe from theft. Northcote SES has had tools & equipment stolen from one of its marked trucks at the Darebin Enterprise Centre in Alphington. Although known as the Northcote SES, they serve all of Darebin, most of Yarra and part of Banyule. The SES is a volunteer organisation. There are 5500 volunteers across Victoria donating over 500,000 hours of their time last year, providing 24 hour response to emergencies. These guys do great work in our community, so to steal the equipment they need to help us out when we need it, is a pretty low act. Let's hope they are able to recover their equipment before the next time Melbourne is hit by a wild storm or flooding.

Diamond Creek has had a recent rash of car break ins. Thieves have not only targeted unlocked cars but also used a screwdriver to force open the doors of a car and a van stealing power tools and other valuables. One unlucky trade lost \$1300 worth of tools from his ute while he was sleeping. Fortunately his wife woke at 2.30 am to see the thieves in the act. Police are looking for two men and a green Hyundai Excel.

It is unfortunate, but the theft of tools and equipment are on a `shopping list' with many items usually `sold' even before they have been stolen! And as the economy strengthens and building and construction grows so too will the theft of tools – mainly from tradies vehicles and building sites.

We hope that you have found this issue of our newsletter interesting and informative. **Don't become another crime statistic** contact your nearest Store-Safe office to discuss the best way to protect your tools, equipment and construction materials.

Wishing you a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year period.

Kind regards,

Grant Breeze
Managing Director.

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