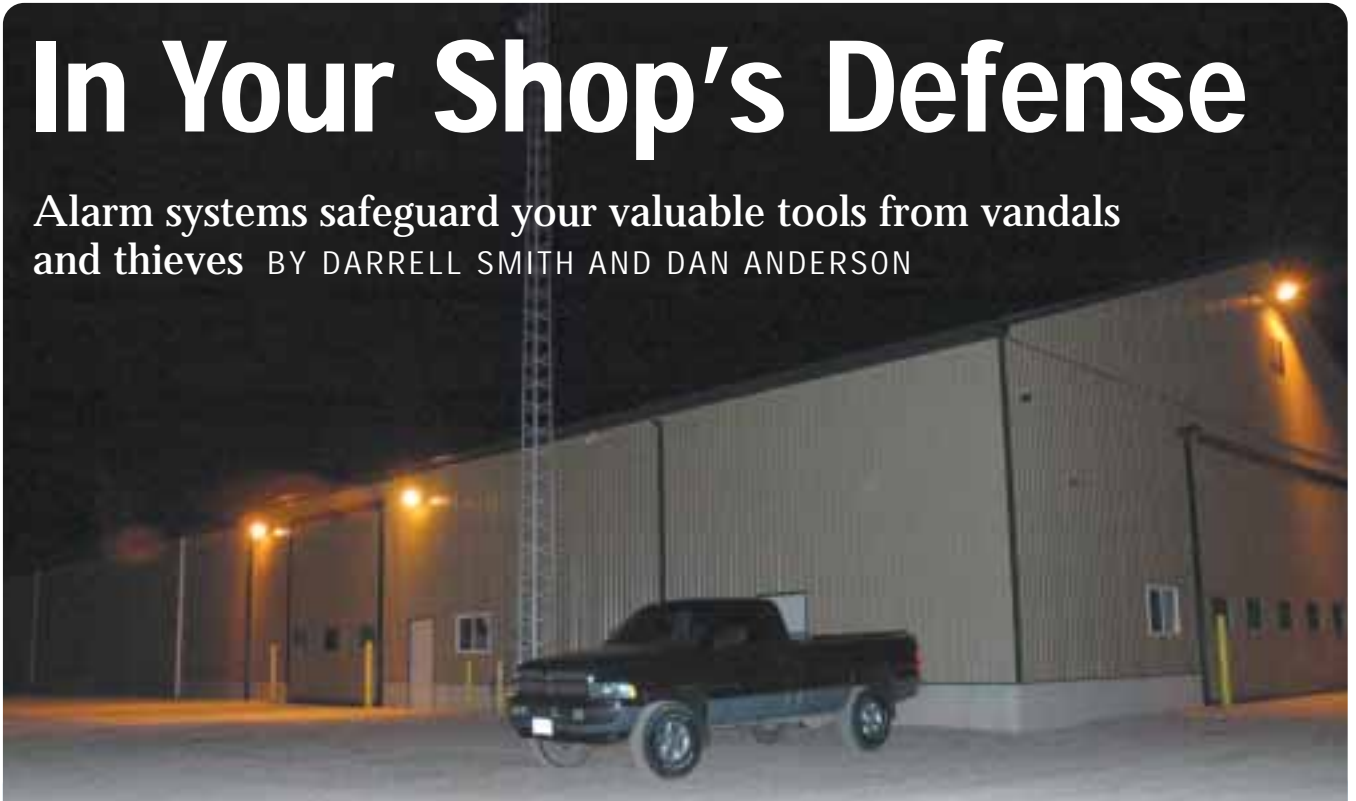


# In Your Shop's Defense

Alarm systems safeguard your valuable tools from vandals and thieves BY DARRELL SMITH AND DAN ANDERSON

PHOTO: DARRELL SMITH



A good lighting system, like these sodium vapor lamps mounted at each building peak and major entrances on Steve Twynstra's shop near Ailsa Craig, Ontario, Canada, is the first step to prevent theft and vandalism.

It's sad to say, but in today's world of highly mobile crooks and vandals, a security system is as essential as the floor, walls and tools in a farm shop. Steve Twynstra of Ailsa Craig, Ontario, Canada, realized that when he built his shop three years ago.

Twynstra's system includes motion and heat detectors in the shop bay and in the adjacent machinery storage area. The detectors trigger two strobe lights and two sirens on the outside of the shop, which alert Twynstra in his house several hundred yards away.

"If I hear the alarms go off, I click on the system's receiver, and a wireless camera lets me look inside the shop," Twynstra explains. During harvest season, his AgCam "window-mount" camera ([www.agcam.com](http://www.agcam.com)) fits on his combine or grain buggy; the rest of the time it pulls guard duty in his shop.

Of course, it's best to discourage crooks from breaking in in the first place. Like rats and cockroaches, criminals shy away from light, so Twynstra mounted a sodium vapor lamp at each peak of the building's roof and along the front side of the shop, which faces the road. The lights also illuminate his fuel storage area.

"Adequate lighting around your building is the single-best way to keep unwanted people off your property," says Mac Fuller, a State Farm Insurance business analyst. "It deters the quick hit and encourages thieves to look for an easier target."

If you decide to install a security system, you will find they consist of three elements, says Merlin Guilbeau, executive director of the National

Fire and Burglar Alarm Association (NFBA). "The control panel is the brain of the system," he explains. "The touchpad turns the system on and off using a unique identification code. Peripheral devices, such as motion detectors,

magnetic door switches and glass-break sensors, send a signal to the control panel."

Fuller notes, "Many losses occur because someone cuts through the skin of a pole building. In that case, motion detectors are a plus."

There are several types of control panels. A basic version can be programmed with several identification

codes for various employees, Guilbeau explains.

Using several codes lets you keep track of when employees come and go and helps guard against theft by employees.

The only drawback to an alarm system consist-

ing of sirens and flashing lights like Twynstra's is if a shop is so isolated that no one hears or sees the alarm. A monitored system eliminates that risk. In monitored systems, if an intruder triggers a sensor, the control panel sends a signal to a monitoring facility staffed by the security company.

"They can call the shop and ask for a password," Guilbeau says. "If they don't get an answer, or if the person who answers can't provide the pass-



## For More Information

For more tips on selecting an alarm company, visit State Farm Insurance's Web site at [www.statefarm.com/learning/be\\_safe/home/burglary/burglary.asp](http://www.statefarm.com/learning/be_safe/home/burglary/burglary.asp).

word, they dispatch the police and call the shop owner or an employee.”

“Modern security systems also can be programmed to send an e-mail text message or call a pager,” he adds. “But, calling a monitoring station is the best idea because they have a plan about how they will react if they can’t reach the owner or an employee.”

**Cost.** The cost of systems varies, depending on what components you choose. Nationwide, the average cost of components and installation runs around \$1,100, Guilbeau says. He estimates monitoring services cost \$25 to \$45 per month. Duane Trudel of Dakota Alarm in Hillsboro, N.D., pegs the monthly cost at about \$15.

“Some insurance companies give discounts on theft and fire insurance—often from 5% to 20%—if a security system is installed,” Trudel adds. “The insurance discount may be enough to pay for the monthly monitoring fee. To get the maximum discount, install a security and a fire monitoring system.”

Shops aren’t complex buildings, which helps hold cost down. “I think you’ll find the cost of a security system to be pretty reasonable for the peace of mind it provides,” Guilbeau says.

Even if you aren’t sure you want an

## More Sophisticated Security Systems

You will probably be satisfied with a fairly basic alarm system that consists of a control panel, touchpad and sensors. But, if desired, and for more cost, you can add more sophisticated features.

“Security systems can be wired to trigger a camera, which can transmit an image to the monitoring station,” says Merlin Guilbeau, executive director of the National Fire and Burglar Alarm Association. “To use a camera, you probably will need a high-speed Internet connection.”

A camera also can record video footage of the intruder. Or, it can be programmed for viewing via the Internet. “A camera adds expense, but it’s another level of security and another way to utilize your security

system,” Guilbeau explains.

An example of a camera-based system is one offered by Lee Lutz. He operates Dairyman’s Link, an agriculture consulting service, and Link Technologies, a security service, in Bliss, N.Y.

The system includes four infrared bullet cameras (you need infrared for low-light conditions), and data is stored on a digital video recorder. Images can be accessed on the Internet or viewed on a monitor in the operator’s house. The plug-and-play system retails for \$1,895. To learn more about the components of the alarm system, go to Lutz’s Web site, [www.wnysecurity.com/packages.html](http://www.wnysecurity.com/packages.html). It’s system H1 (4x4), under the Home Owner’s Line.

alarm system, consider wiring your new shop for one during construction, Trudel advises. It’s a small expense during construction and will make it much cheaper to add an alarm system at a later date.

**Shopping for a system.** You can purchase a system and install it yourself or hire a local electrician. But, it’s probably wise to consult a specialist with a security company or a consultant like Lee Lutz of Bliss, N.Y. He operates a security service, Link Technologies, as well as a farm consulting service called Dairyman’s Link ([www.dairymanlink.com](http://www.dairymanlink.com)).

“If you just call up someone in the phone book, you may wind up with a more expensive system than you need,” he says. “If you mail order a system, you may not be able to hook it up.”

Guilbeau says, “People who do this day in and day out understand where to place sensors for quick detection. They can help you find the right technology for your conditions, such as sensors that will not be triggered by pets.”

Get at least three estimates from reputable firms. “It doesn’t cost anything to get a proposal,” Guilbeau adds.

You can find security compa-

nies in your area by visiting the NFBA Web site, [www.alarm.org](http://www.alarm.org); click on “Member Company List.”

Here are tips from NFBA and State Farm Insurance about choosing a security firm:

- Ask companies if employees are trained and/or certified by NFBA.

- Ask if companies have appropriate state and local licenses, if required.

- Ask if companies do pre-employment criminal background screenings.

- Ask for names of customers that you can contact.

- Get leads on companies from your local police or sheriff’s department, state licensing agencies, consumer protection agencies and the Better Business Bureau. Or, get referrals from your insurance companies, friends and other farmers.

- Ask to see identification when the company representative visits you.

- Ask about warranties.

- Get quotes in writing.

- Make a checklist to compare various companies’ packages.

Before you commit to an alarm system, ask your sheriff’s department how long it takes them to respond to a call.

“Remember, a security system does not prevent thieves from breaking in—it just alerts you that someone has attempted to enter or has gotten inside,” State Farm’s Fuller says. “An effective security plan must also include strong windows, doors and locks and good all-around security habits.” **E**



PHOTO: DARRELL SMITH

This AgCam camera lets Twynstra monitor his shop from inside his home. During harvest season, he uses it on his combine or grain buggy.