**Feeling Frustrated?**

By Melissa Somers, Director CPP SoCal

*“To Conquer frustration, one must remain intensely focused on the outcome, not the obstacles.” T.F. Hodge*

In the world of heavy equipment theft there seems to be a prevailing theme among individuals in both the construction industry and law enforcement: frustration.

Both parties have an intimate knowledge of their own worlds but when the two collide in the form of a theft, good communication is the key that opens the door to resolution. The reality is that – through no one’s fault - individuals in the construction industry and law enforcement are speaking different languages and the lines of communication get crossed. Using language and terminology that’s second nature to you to report incidents might be inadvertently harming your chances of a recovery if that lingo isn’t familiar to the reporting officer. While dealing with miscommunication issues can be frustrating, it’s important to realize that successful communication is about *all* parties understanding the situation and details clearly.

Consider this:

A “serial number” to someone in the construction industry is referred to as a “VIN” by law enforcement. You could tell a police officer that a “generator” has been stolen but he has no reason to know the difference between a towable generator or a portable one. And while this may appear to be irrelevant, it could make the difference between getting your property back and having to replace the item. Law enforcement enters a loss in one of two systems: APS (Automated Property System) or SVS (Stolen Vehicle System) and *where* the item is entered makes all the difference in the world. If your equipment has LoJack and is entered into the APS instead of SVS, the LoJack system will not be activated. To many, heavy equipment is that strange, intimidating dirty vehicle left at the side of the freeway when it’s being worked on while we’re stuck in the traffic the weird beasts are creating and that’s about it. The Average Joe has no reason to know the difference between a backhoe or a Bobcat; a skid steer or a scraper. Good communication is the key to getting everyone on the same page.

Having organized, complete information on hand to report the incident is vital. Knowing HOW to best convey the information is just as important.

* Let the officer know if the item stolen is a vehicle and know the PIN, VIN or serial number. (Remember: in the world of equipment, these are virtually the same.)
* Have a copy of the registration or title if it is a towable and note that every towable should have a special equipment - SE – plate.
* Give the officer your equipment or inventory number and refer to it as your OAN (Owner Applied Number).
* Have a photo of the equipment with a closeup of the serial number (PIN or VIN) on hand to add to the report.
* Share any information from eye witnesses or footage from security cameras.
* Confirm that you and the officer understand each other and ask if the officer has any questions.
* Give the officer your contact information and invite him to contact you if more questions come up after he leaves your location.
* Ask the reporting officer for the report number and when the equipment information will be entered into the stolen article or vehicle system.
* Request a copy of the report for your records and insurance purposes and ask how long it might take to receive it.

You might not be able to control the situation entirely but arming yourself with pertinent information - and the communication skills to successfully convey that information - shows that you are not just a victim, but a victim that is willing to do your part and work with law enforcement to get your property back.

Familiarizing yourself with others’ methods of communication and lingo– for reporting construction theft or talking to your employees or spouse– might take some time and effort on your part. That investment will pay off with improved communication that that’s sure to lead to less frustration – and that’s something we can all enjoy.

*The Crime Prevention Program of SoCal (CPP) is a non -profit organization working with our members, law enforcement, the construction industry and area automotive theft task forces to educate, empower and engage in a community working towards fighting crime in the construction industry. For information on how you can join the CPP community, contact Melissa Somers, Executive Director @ 562-860-9006 or email* *Melissa.somers.cpp@gmail.com*