

AG CRIMES UNIT

In recognizing the increase in rural agricultural crime, the Merced County Sheriff's Department created the Ag Crimes Unit in 1999.

The Agricultural Crime Unit detectives are assigned all agricultural-based cases and strive to promote a working relationship with farmers and ranchers through both personal contact and the local Farm Bureau's membership.

The mission of the Merced County Sheriff's Department Agricultural Crime Unit is to enforce laws and to provide investigative services related primarily to theft and property damage in the agricultural communities and rural industries. The crime unit strives to provide current and updated crime prevention techniques and strategies to the agricultural communities.

The Merced County Agricultural Crime Unit is one of thirteen in the State of California. The thirteen county Ag Crime Unit meets monthly to share information and intelligence.

The Merced County Sheriff's Department in cooperation with the Tulare County ACTION project re-established the Owner Applied Numbering (OAN) system, which stamps and marks equipment and property helping in the identification process in case of future theft.

For more information or to apply for an OAN log onto the ACTION website:
<http://agcrime.org/OAN.htm>

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY AND AGRICULTURAL THEFT

Law enforcement cannot overcome agricultural theft without the support of the ranchers, growers and farmers individually and as a community. When you call your law enforcement agency, you are also helping others from becoming victims of crime. It's the agricultural community's responsibility to report such thefts and crimes.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

If you see a crime being committed, report it immediately and accurately. If you are a victim of a crime, report it as soon as possible. Even a short delay in reporting may significantly reduce the chance of catching the criminal. Don't hesitate to call if you think something may be wrong. Don't worry about being embarrassed if your suspicions turn out to be unfounded. Some of the largest agricultural thefts have occurred under the guise of a legitimate looking situation.

The information you can provide may stop a crime, recover stolen items or assist ongoing investigations.

If you have any information regarding criminal or suspicious activity please call the Merced County Sheriff's Department at 209-385-7445

INFORMATIONAL WEB SITES

Merced County Sheriff's Department
www.mercedsheriff.com

California Highway Patrol-Farm & Construction Theft Prevention
www.chp.ca.gov/html/farmconstruction.html

California Farm Bureau
www.cfbf.com

California Farm Bureau – Ag Crime Prevention
<http://www.cfbf.com/programs/ruralcrime/index.cfm>

United States Department of Agriculture
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>

AG CRIME SPECIFIC WEBSITES

California Rural Crime Prevention Task Force
www.crcptf.com

Agricultural Crime Technology Information & Operation Network (ACTION)
<http://agcrime.org/index.htm>

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS

Security is your first line of defense. Your property's security should make a criminal stop, weigh the risks involved, and encourage the perpetrator to leave without entering your property.

- Secure gates and locks
- Fence property
- Provide vehicle barriers (ditches)
- Know the location of your equipment
- Mark and brand your equipment
- Increase lighting around property and storage areas
- Maintain fences and gates
- Post warning signs around pastures and lots

BE ALERT FOR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

- A slow moving vehicle near a grove, pasture, or outbuilding.
- Unfamiliar vehicles at dawn or dusk, or unusual and suspicious noises that you cannot explain.
- Unknown individuals wandering or standing near groves or pastures. Camps setting up near abandoned properties.
- Persons asking for work may be casing your property for potential theft targets.
- Abandoned vehicles may be stolen or used by people scouting your property.
- Bags, boxes or unfamiliar containers hidden or found on your property.

WHAT TO DO IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU

1. Do not attempt to enter the crime area it may not be safe.
2. Keep everyone out of the crime area. Do not touch or move anything in the area, physical evidence is a primary part of any investigation.
3. Immediately report the crime to law enforcement. Call the non-emergency number if you discover the crime after it has occurred. Call 911 if the crime is in progress. Prompt reporting of the crime will aid law enforcement in the investigation.

WHY YOU SHOULD REPORT

Law enforcement agencies track crime trends based on many different factors like location of crimes and type of crimes. Even if you consider the theft to be small, it may be part of a larger problem in other areas or other counties. You may be able to provide critical information that will aid a different investigation. Reporting the crime or theft can only increase the chance of recovering property and apprehending suspects.

Remember to always report a crime. You may prevent yourself and neighbors from being victims again. Law enforcement can only help if you report the crime.

WRITE IT DOWN

As soon as possible, write down everything you can remember. Don't rely on your memory. It can be very easy to get things mixed up or forget details especially if you are the victim. Be as exact as you can and try to avoid guessing. Keep this template handy so that you can find it when needed.

Keep in mind that the wrong information can hinder an investigation.

PHONE REPORTS

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Phone reports should only be used in rare circumstances. A phone report is only used as a means to report the theft and no investigation will take place.

The Merced County Sheriffs Department recommends you call a deputy, so that an investigation can be conducted.

Non emergency phone number to request a deputy or a phone report:
209-385-7445

Emergency:
911

IMPORTANT INFORMATION NEEDED WHEN REPORTING A CRIME OR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Always keep this template near or in a convenient location. Remember do not rely on your memory the notes you write down can be vital to an investigation.

Person/Suspect

Height _____
Weight _____
Hair _____
Eyes _____

Clothing/Color/Description

Shirt _____
Pants _____
Shoes _____

Vehicle Description

License _____
Plate _____
Year _____
Make _____
Model _____
Color _____
Direction of Travel _____

Additional Descriptions/Distinguishing Features _____

MERCED COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

AGRICULTURAL CRIME UNIT



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RURAL CRIME PREVENTION AND REPORTING

SHERIFF MARK PAZIN
UNDER-SHERIFF BILL BLAKE

PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH
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