

# Terror in Granby

Travel through the Rocky Mountains outside of Denver and one marvels at their serenity, majesty, and beauty. There are also other advantages. In addition to the natural wonder, this is an area that has seen little of the poverty, pollution, or crime that has touched nearby Denver and so many cities, big and small, across the rest of America.

Granby is a winding two-hour drive northwest of Denver, on the southern edge of the Rocky Mountain National Park. For years, it relied heavily on timbering and ranching, but those days are long gone. Instead, the town welcomes tourists who visit the surrounding areas for fishing, hunting, boating, and skiing.

Skiers frequent such posh area resorts with names you might find in a travel brochure: Vail, Steamboat Springs, and Winter Park. The hotel rooms are expensive, but the air is crisp, the food is top-notch, and the water is clean.

But there also is another side to the mountains. A darker side. The pristine crevices and valleys can hide pettiness and grudges, greed and violence.

The people of Granby experienced this first-hand more than a year ago. They talk about it as though it all occurred just

last week. The impressions remain deep and the memories

keen. New buildings and concrete curbs in the town of 1500 people can easily replace the ones that were destroyed. Repairing the frayed nerves is more difficult.

This is the story of a producer, who watched the curbs and streets he helped build become rubble.

## A producer expands

Granby is large enough to support its own concrete producer. Mountain Park Concrete sits close to Agate Avenue on the northern edge of town. The next closest producer is Aggregate Industries a couple of towns away.

Cody Docheff bought Certified Ready Mix in 1972 when it only produced 5000 yards a year. Today, as Mountain Park Concrete, it sells 40,000 yards of concrete annually and services all of Grand County. Although primarily a ready-mix producer, Docheff's operation manufactures precast septic tanks, manholes, landscaping blocks and barriers and wall panels for highways.

Mountain Park Concrete is a family

affair. Helping Docheff, 65, is his son, Joe Docheff, 38, who is vice president. Joe started hanging around the plant when he was 8 years

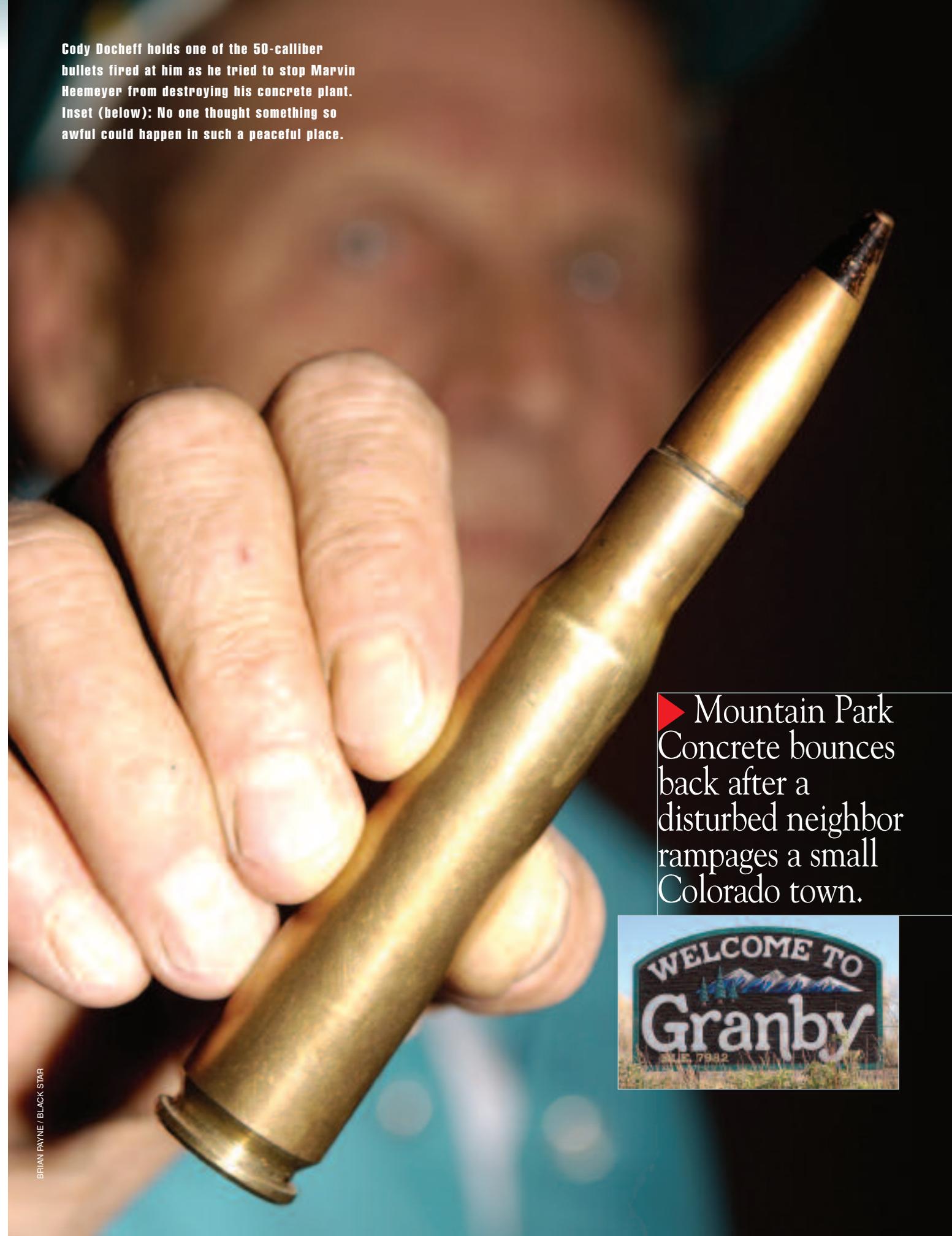
old. Cody Docheff's wife, Susie, works there occasionally. She takes care of book-keeping and pays bills, "in between doing laundry at home," she says. All three are equal owners.

Business was so brisk, the Docheffs sought to expand their operation and build a larger plant on a vacant lot a half-mile away. The Docheffs planned to build a new batch plant and lease the remaining 23 parcels to small manufacturers, thus creating a small commercial-light industrial park on the northern edge of town.

It's an exaggeration to say everyone knows everyone in a town the size of Granby. But you can't live here without knowing an awful lot of people. Like neighbors often do, the Docheffs would talk with Marvin Heemeyer when they'd meet on the street.

Known throughout town as Marv, Heemeyer owned a muffler shop next to where the Docheffs planned to build their new plant. Heemeyer did some welding jobs on the side and rode a snowmobile in his spare time. He even did some repairs,

Cody Docheff holds one of the 50-caliber bullets fired at him as he tried to stop Marvin Heemeyer from destroying his concrete plant. Inset (below): No one thought something so awful could happen in such a peaceful place.



▶ Mountain Park Concrete bounces back after a disturbed neighbor rampages a small Colorado town.



BRIAN PAYNE/BLACK STAR



mostly fixing mufflers, on Mountain Park's vehicles. Still, no one realized just how mechanically-inclined Heemeyer was, just how good he was building things with his hands.

### A fire burns

The Docheffs learned that the zoning board required that they obtain a Planned Development Overlay District permit so they could build the plant. "We expected questions at first," says Joe Docheff. "It was a new concept and it was a new idea."

The Docheffs answered those questions at several meetings and even built a small model of the plant to show neighbors what the operation would look like. After appeasing most, only one neighbor remained opposed. Heemeyer was not going to let them have it that easily.

He fought every step of the way. He complained to the Environmental Protection Agency, so the Docheffs had a professional noise analysis done. He filed an array of lawsuits, all of which were dismissed.

Two and a half years later, Mountain Park finally received the zoning permits to build its new plant. But the die was cast. In defeat, Heemeyer had made a spectacle of himself. "I remember he was a little weird at the last meeting," recalls Susie Docheff.

"Every step of the process, more and more you could see the fire burning inside him," adds Joe Docheff.

Heemeyer then traveled to California and bought a bulldozer at an auction. He had it shipped to Granby, where he kept a For Sale sign on it outside his business. Few gave this much thought.

Then, Heemeyer sold his muffler shop and vanished. His disappearance was so mysterious, some thought he may have taken the \$425,000 from the sale and left the area to start another life. "We thought

he went off and was going to be a happy camper," says Joe Docheff.

But the town of Granby would learn Heemeyer didn't leave. He actually spent more time in Granby than ever, day after day, night after night. Biding his time.

### A beautiful day

Sometimes the most extraordinary events occur on the most ordinary days.

Friday, June 4, 2004, dawned brightly. The sky was clear and warmer weather finally was setting in, causing snow that had fallen months earlier on the surrounding peaks to further recede. "It was," Susie Docheff would recall much later, "a beautiful day."

It was a slow day at Mountain Park. Joe was at the gravel pit 20 miles away at their home, and that's where Susie was at 2 p.m. The Docheffs sell road base from the gravel pit. Only Cody was at the plant.

"I was screening topsoil and a call came across the radio that a big explosion went off at the precast shop," says Cody. "I jumped out of the loader and ran across the yard. That's when I saw the machine knocking the hell out of things."

**Top: A sheriff's deputy fires at Heemeyer's bulldozer at the concrete plant. None of the 200 rounds law enforcement officials fired that day stopped the rampage. Bottom: Cody Docheff operates a front-end loader and tries to thwart Heemeyer, who fired 12 shots into the loader's bucket. Electrician Wayne Miller was across the street from Mountain Park Concrete that day, grabbed his camera, and snapped these photographs when he saw and heard the ruckus.**

At first, Docheff wasn't sure what he was looking at. "I thought, 'What the hell is that thing?' It was the ugliest damn thing. Then I recognized it and right then, I knew it was Heemeyer."

The long-parked dozer that had the For Sale sign on it in front of Heemeyer's muffler shop barreled out of the same building which now housed the The Trash Co. refuse company. It made a beeline for the concrete plant. But it wasn't exactly the same dozer.

During those months when no one saw Heemeyer, he was closer to the Docheffs than they had imagined. When he sold his muffler shop to The Trash Co., he arranged to lease half of the building. He erected a wall to separate his space from the rest of the structure and changed the door locks.

The leased area became his home; he had food, a television, and a cot inside. Heemeyer spent the next six months attaching armored 1/2-inch-thick steel plate to the construction vehicle. Bulletproof plexiglass protected the slats he used to look outside. He mounted closed-circuit cameras outside the vehicle and video



WAYNE MILLER



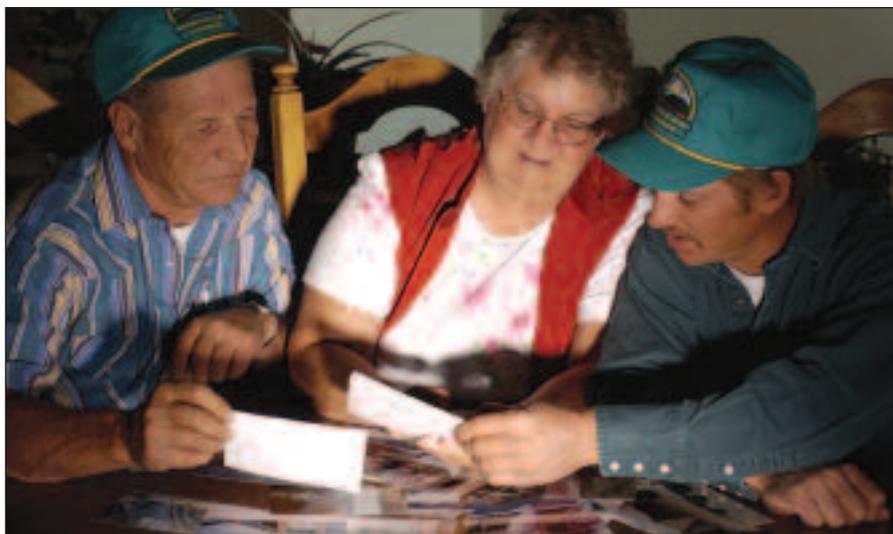
WAYNE MILLER



MOUNTAIN PARK CONCRETE



BRIAN PAYNE / BLACK STAR



**Top: Granby Town Hall had to be razed after Heemeyer destroyed it. Children were reading in the basement, which housed the town's library, just before the damage occurred. Middle: A gaping hole is left in the side of Mountain Park Concrete. Bottom: Cody Docheff looks at photographs of the destruction with his wife, Susie, and son, Joe, both of whom also work at the producer.**

didn't damage or destroy was the batch plant. The Docheffs speculate Heemeyer feared that if he knocked it over, it would topple onto the bulldozer.

Heemeyer turned his bulldozer onto Agate Avenue and pointed it south in the direction of the rest of the town. He had a plan and knew exactly where his enemies lived and worked.

### Terror through town

Police officers followed closely as the makeshift armored battering ram crawled its way through town at 5 mph. Police fired an estimated 200 rounds at the vehicle to no avail. A local radio announcer stood on the street and broadcast the scene live to bewildered listeners.

The buildings Heemeyer next destroyed or damaged were notable only for how ordinary they were: Liberty Savings Bank, Mountain Parks Electric Co., Maple Street Builders, Gambles General Store, Granby Town Hall, the Sky-Hi newspaper office, and Kopy Kat Graphics and Printing. This havoc was in addition to the parked vehicles he flattened and numerous street lamps, road signs, and curbs he obliterated. As a precaution, six patients from a medical center were evacuated.

The destruction was personal. At the bank, he aimed directly at the corner office where a woman who sat on the zoning board worked. Dick Thompson served on the town council for 20 years and was mayor when the zoning dispute started, but died recently. Heemeyer destroyed the home where his 82-year-old widow lived.

Most galling was the bulldozing of the Town Hall, not because many town records and archives were destroyed. Just moments earlier, several children were reading during a story hour in the basement which also housed Granby's library.

Hoping he would cause an explosion, Heemeyer stopped at the southern end of Agate Avenue. He fired a rifle at a propane company's storage tanks. But he was unsuccessful. The trail of destruction finally ended in front of Gambles, owned by one of the town board members. Leaking fluid and spewing black smoke after smashing into the store, the engine overheated

monitors inside so could see where he was steering.

### Concrete for protection

One of his preparations still especially irks the Docheffs. Authorities would later find a pallet of packaged concrete where Heemeyer did his work. He placed the concrete in between two sheets of steel to further thwart bullets he knew would be fired. "He used concrete to protect himself," Joe Docheff says in disgust.

His first target was the small precast shop. Heemeyer flattened it, yet somehow the two employees inside escaped injury.

Cody Docheff then took matters into his own hands as Heemeyer neared the main plant. Docheff jumped into his front-end loader and a macabre demolition derby ensued.

"I tried poking the loader bucket into the dozer's track, into the motor, but I couldn't bust the shroud," he says. "I couldn't do nothing." Heemeyer then fired 10 to 12 50-caliber shots from a rifle, most of which struck the front-end loader's bucket.

Heemeyer then started ramming the building while slowly circling it. Parts of the building caved in on themselves. Sheriff's deputies came, but were powerless. About the only part of the building Heemeyer



and the bulldozer stalled.

Then, at 4:30 p.m., a muffled shot. Authorities figured Heemeyer killed himself. But fearful that he may have booby-trapped the vehicle, authorities set off explosives in a vain effort to strip away the armor.

Colorado Gov. Bill Owens toured the destruction by helicopter that evening. Some said it looked like a tornado had struck the mountain town.

### The Aftermath

Heemeyer's lifeless body finally was

removed the next morning. Damage in town totaled \$5 million, \$2 million of which was at Mountain Park Concrete. The Docheffs learned their business was underinsured and had been covered for only \$700,000.

Heemeyer had destroyed or heavily damaged 13 buildings throughout Granby. He had devoted his life full-time to his rampage. "The amount of thought and planning was immense," says Joe Docheff. "The guys who dismantled the bulldozer could not believe how well it was put together." The bulldozer, called the "Armageddon tank" by some, weighed 85

tons. It eventually was scrapped.

Authorities searched the dead man's home and found his plan on his personal computer. Heemeyer felt he had been called on to act out his rage. "He thought this was his reason for being put on earth," says Joe Docheff. "To teach the people of Granby a lesson."

Heemeyer had compiled a list of 107 people he thought had wronged him. The Docheffs were at the top of the list, which also included judges, politicians, newspaper editors, and, of course, anyone involved in the zoning case. Three rifles

and three handguns were later found inside the bulldozer, along with enough food and water to last a week.

### Giving Thanks

At the end of a day that started so peacefully, the Docheffs and the town were dumbstruck. Businesses had been destroyed, people were driven from their workplaces, and a man lay dead with a bullet in his head. So, what good could have possibly resulted from such a violent, irrational day?

In time, people looked for blessings to be counted. "It's a wonder no one was injured," says Susie Docheff. The Docheffs and others in Granby at least had that thought to cling to: No one was injured.

Cody Docheff still reflects fondly on the community support and on the contractors who stood by Mountain Park as the Docheffs put the pieces back together. They could have ordered concrete from competitors in neighboring towns, but did not. Crews made repairs quickly and started batching concrete only three days later. In



Cody Docheff reflects while standing outside the building where Marvin Heemeyer planned his day of rage. When this recent photo was taken, it was the first time Docheff visited the building since the attack.

the meantime, the Docheffs restarted their plant in Fraser, about 15 miles away.

It's one year later and the Docheffs are

eating burgers and sandwiches and joking with a waitress at the Silver Spur restaurant. When a visitor points out that at least Heemeyer directed his anger at buildings and not people, the Docheffs become serious. They won't stand for such talk.

"He had no regard for human life," snaps Susie Docheff. Cody adds that if Heemeyer truly didn't want to hurt anybody, he would have plundered the center of town on the weekend, when most businesses would have been empty. "He hurt a lot of people," says Cody Docheff. "The whole community suffered."

"It was depressing going through that summer, seeing our building on the ground." adds Susie Docheff. "It was just terrible." **TCP**

## Security a Top Concern

While the experiences at Mountain Park Concrete are a worst-case scenario, few concrete plants or construction jobsites are protected by security systems. Those with protection usually adopt residential systems which are not designed to meet specific jobsite needs and often do not protect key assets.

The National Insurance Crime Bureau and Associated General Contractors of America reported that more than \$1 billion is lost annually to theft of construction equipment and tools. The National Association of Home Builders has reported that residential jobsite losses account for an annual 1% to 2% increase in the cost of building a new home.

Research by Dewalt Industrial Tool found 97% of 1500 construction end-users and buyers were concerned about jobsite security. Tool theft, material theft, and truck/van protection were their top three concerns.

While managers can't plan for every possible theft and mishap, manufacturers offer a wide array of security products geared for the challenges of construction to

put your mind at ease. Circle the reader service number for more information.

### No wire pulling with portable alarm system

The SiteLock portable wireless alarm system by Dewalt Industrial Tool saves time and money because there is no drilling, trenching, conduit, and no wire pulling. It is self-installed; no separate electrical contractor is needed. Wireless transmitter layouts are easily reconfigured to new floor plans by moving devices to where they are needed. Battery life can be as high as five years for a jobsite security cable lock that rarely alarms. Dewalt Industrial Tool. 800-433-9258. www.dewalt.com. **Circle 1.**

### Police can find your vehicle sooner

The LoJack Early Warning Recovery System lets you know if your vehicle is being moved without your permission so you can check on it immediately. You choose how you want to be alerted: by phone, e-mail, or alpha pager. The system provides an added layer of protection on top of the LoJack Stolen Vehicle Recovery

System and enables police to track and recover your stolen vehicle sooner. LoJack Corp. 877-775-6522. www.lojack.com. **Circle 2.**

### Bulletproofing offers protection

Bullet Guard designs and/or installs a wide range of bullet resisting (proof) products. Projects are taken from concept, through design, into



fabrication and manufacturing. They are supplied or installed as the customer chooses. Interior lobby security and access control are specialties. The product line is scrupulously monitored for its bullet-stopping ability in a live-fire testing facility. Fiberglass prevents ricochets and has superior one-hour fire rating. Bullet Guard. 800-233-5632. www.bulletguard.com. **Circle 3.**

### GPS for your equipment

Bobcat Co. has introduced a global positioning system (GPS), theft-recovery, and equipment management package on its machines. Bobcat dealers offer a system with the ability to create virtual boundaries or geo-fences, triggering alerts when the machine leaves certain areas. It also enables GPS tracking and transmits equipment's location data, operating status, and engine hours on-demand or at automated intervals. Bobcat Co., a unit of Ingersoll-Rand. 866-823-7898. www.bobcat.com. **Circle 4.**

### Sets security perimeter

vShepherd theft protection and recovery products by Longview Advantage deliver peace of mind. Regardless of where your assets are located, vShepherd sets an invisible security perimeter. If your assets travel outside the perimeter, an alarm is immediately sent to a 24/7/365 Alarm and Recovery Center. vShepherd may locate and recover your property before you even know it's missing. Longview Advantage. 877-562-8287. www.longviewadvantage.com. **Circle 5.**

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