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Ag Retail's Role in Homeland Security

Security goes hand in hand with safety, thanks to ResponsibleAg program

Listen to the conversation over the counter at your local farm co-op, and the talk will center on commodity prices, input costs and rental rates — along with the weather, of course. One topic not likely to be front and center? Terrorism.

While fertilizers such as anhydrous ammonia and ammonium nitrate are useful tools of the farming trade, these substances and hundreds of others can become tools of terror in the wrong hands. That's why Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to establish the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) program in 2006. The program in its current form is authorized until 2023 and managed by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

"We have a really diverse landscape of chemical facilities in the United States," says Dave Wulf, past associate director of CISA's Chemical Security, which oversees the CFATS program. "People don't necessarily think of a farm co-op as a chemical facility, but agricultural retailers are among the communities within the CFATS program, along with fertilizer manufacturers and distributors."

Collaborating on security

During its 15 years of existence, CFATS has focused specifically on security at high-risk chemical facilities across the nation. The program's goal is to ensure that such facilities have appropriate measures in place to reduce the risk that certain hazardous chemicals could be weaponized by terrorists.



The CFATS program keeps tabs on fertilizers such as anhydrous ammonia, aqua ammonia, ammonium nitrate and potassium nitrate, as well as some fumigants and even propane that could pose a threat should they fall into the wrong hands. Agricultural retailers, fertilizer manufacturers and distributors of these types of chemicals are among the communities within the CFATS program.

Within the agricultural supply industry, the ResponsibleAg Certification Program helps agribusinesses adhere to security regulations such as CFATS. Launched in 2014, the industry-led initiative also focuses on environmental, health and safety (EHS) compliance to keep employees, customers and communities safe. The initiative offers a systematic approach to facility evaluation, recommendations for improvements and a comprehensive collection of resources that members can turn to for information and education.



Wulf, who recently was appointed to the role of Deputy Administrator of the Treasury Department's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, says that the CFATS program keeps tabs on about 320 chemicals of interest that could pose a threat should they fall into the wrong hands. This list includes fertilizers such as anhydrous ammonia, aqua ammonia, ammonium nitrate and potassium nitrate, as well as some fumigants and even propane.

"If a facility possesses or plans to possess a chemical on the list that meets or exceeds specified threshold quantities or concentrations, a 'Top-Screen' report must be submitted to the CFATS program," Wulf explains, noting that the chemicals of interest possessed by most farmers and ranchers currently aren't subject to reporting if the chemicals are applied directly to crops, feed, land, livestock or poultry. "We then conduct a risk assessment and determine which facilities are at the highest risk of terrorist attack or exploitation."

If CISA determines that an agricultural retailer or fertilizer manufacturer is at high risk, the facility must identify critical assets associated with each chemical of



DAVE WULF
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interest and develop a security plan to protect them. Fortunately, the ResponsibleAg auditing process provides tools facilities can use to prepare for inspections related to their security.

To date, roughly 99,000 Top-Screen reports have been submitted by more than 43,000 unique facilities across all industries, from agriculture and energy to plastics and pharmaceuticals. Of these, the CFATS program has identified about 3,300 facilities that are at high risk, including a number of agricultural retailers, fertilizer manufacturers and distributors.

While tens of thousands of facilities aren't considered high risk under CFATS,

Wulf says that doesn't mean there is no risk at those locations.

"There are facilities out there, probably including a large number of agricultural retail facilities, that don't necessarily identify as chemical facilities," he says. "I think programs like ResponsibleAg are really important in that they educate not only on safety protocols but also on the array of regulatory requirements that might apply in the security arena."

Strengthening security through chemical stewardship

During his time overseeing the CFATS program, Wulf had the opportunity to tour the one-of-a-kind Ford B. West Center for Responsible Agriculture in Owensboro, Kentucky. He was impressed with the facility.

"I was struck by the interactive nature of the training opportunities and the different scenarios presented," he says. "It really seemed like an environment that would help move the needle on safety."

Wulf adds that from his perspective, ResponsibleAg is one of several stewardship programs that help educate participants

about their many regulatory obligations, whether they be safety or security related.

"CISA and its stakeholders have built a pantheon of stewardship programs across various segments of chemical-focused industries," Wulf says. "It's always a good thing to be part of a broader community of your peers, and the ResponsibleAg program contributes to more robust chemical security."

To learn more about how CISA is working with facilities to enhance chemical security, visit [cisa.gov/chemical-security](https://www.cisa.gov/chemical-security). For more information about ResponsibleAg, visit www.ResponsibleAg.org or call 270.683.6777.

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ResponsibleAg is an industry-led initiative **committed** to helping agribusinesses properly store and handle farm input supplies. The program helps members ensure they are **compliant** with environmental, health, safety and security regulations to keep employees, customers and our communities **safe**.

