

# TEN WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR FLEET FROM CARGO THIEVES

Increasingly, thieves and crime rings are using technology and other effective tactics to target valuable cargo as it moves along the nation's highways. The average loss per cargo-theft incident was nearly \$190,000 in 2015, according to CargoNet, a firm that collects and analyzes cargo-crime data.

The overall number of events and value of stolen cargo is difficult to pinpoint, but the Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates the loss value at \$30 billion annually. Many companies don't report cargo crimes for fear of negative publicity or insurance rate hikes.

A single cargo-theft incident could be crippling for your company. Even if your fleet has cargo insurance, coverage might be thwarted by policy exemptions (i.e., the truck was left unattended, the driver was involved, the crime occurred in a high-theft-rate area, etc.).

To protect your business, you have to know what the thieves are up to and stay a step ahead. When your team is aware of the trends and on top of its game, most thieves will pass up your trucks in search of an easier target. Here are 10 ways to combat cargo theft:



## PUT A DAMPER ON INSIDE JOBS

Pre-employment screening is key. Run background checks, pay special attention to Department of Transportation drug tests and consider hair testing, which can flag potential drivers who pass DOT urine tests. Drivers with addictions—in addition to posing safety hazards—usually struggle to finance their habits, making them more likely to be involved in cargo theft.

## USE HIGH- AND LOW-TECH THEFT-PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The growing range of wireless solutions includes covert GPS tracking, geofencing, systems that send alerts when trailer doors are opened, devices that detect whether a trailer is loaded or empty and vehicle-immobilization technology. Keep using physical deterrents and smart practices as well. Tractor and trailer locking devices and security seals are important tools.

## TEACH YOUR DRIVERS TO BE TIGHT-LIPPED AND OBSERVANT

Drivers often discuss their hauls at truck stops, where people working with theft rings could be listening and notifying accomplices who then follow high-value loads.

## FOLLOW THE 250-MILE RULE

Train drivers to fill fuel tanks before they pick up loads and to avoid stopping during the first 250 miles. Thieves who watched as expensive cargo was loaded onto a truck will follow it a significant distance in hopes the driver will leave the load unattended. Make sure drivers are mindful of following vehicles with multiple occupants and out-of-state plates.

## GUARD THE GOODS

Instruct drivers to park in well-lit areas with security cameras and to check trailers frequently. Drivers should never store keys inside the tractor or in other places a thief is likely to look.

## TREAT HIGH-DOLLAR AND COMMONLY TARGETED LOADS WITH EXTRA CAUTION

Set up a three-way call with the driver, his or her manager and the customer service representative before this type of load is shipped. They should review security procedures that will be followed. Make it your policy for drivers hauling high-value loads to stop only at secure locations. Also consider offering team service to shippers of expensive goods.

## HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

Breakdowns and driver emergencies increase theft risks. Make sure your emergency-response team is available 24/7 and drivers have access to up-to-date phone numbers.

## BE WARY OF HOLIDAY BREAKS

Cargo theft increases significantly during time periods surrounding national holidays. In-demand loads are being shipped and are often left unattended while businesses are closed. If possible, don't let loaded trailers sit over holidays. Have your team double check that receivers' holiday hours line up with scheduled delivery times.

## DEFEND CARGO AT YOUR FACILITIES

Park vehicles in an orderly manner on a well-lit lot and lock trucks and trailers. Inspect your facilities' lighting, back-up generators, alarm systems, surveillance equipment, perimeter fencing and other barriers regularly and repair problems promptly.

## BE PREPARED FOR AN INCIDENT

The first hours after a theft are critical. Reporting it to law enforcement officials immediately increases your chances of recovering stolen cargo. Be prepared to quickly turn over data from electronic tracking devices, and keep accurate, easily accessible records of license plate numbers, VINs and descriptions, tractors, trailers, ocean containers and chassis.