

Crime Fighters

By Dave Goruk

Consider these 8 tips to protect your cargo and limit your losses

There is a price to pay every time someone steals a trailer full of freight. Even if an insurance policy covers the price of the stolen cargo and equipment, there is still an insurance deductible to pay. And potential costs do not end there. Customers who lose their freight will be upset and might choose to take future business to someone else. A fleet that faces too many thefts can also expect insurance premiums to rise, or find it tough to find insurance coverage at all.

Some of the most popular targets might seem surprising. Thieves are obviously interested in valuable goods like home electronics, but they are also looking for any other goods that are easy to sell and difficult to trace. Pallets loaded with baby formula, diapers and packaged foods, for example, can be quickly sold in a local flea market, while many other loads can be stolen and turned into scrap metal.

Consider these tips to protect your customer's freight as well as your business:

- 1. Store the cargo for short periods of time** – Fleets are responsible for protecting every load, but they can still limit the amount of time they care for the cargo. Depending on where the freight needs to travel, dispatchers can be encouraged to schedule pickups closer to the time of a delivery, rather than arranging to store a loaded trailer overnight.
- 2. Add some extra locks to your trailers and trucks** – Thieves tend to look for easy targets and can be discouraged by nothing more than a sealed door. Trailers can be secured by a simple bolt seal or padlock, while cone-shaped pin locks will make it tough to hook up to the king pin and drive away. Trucks can be secured with extra locks of their own. Available options will lock everything from air brake gladhands to the brake control valves on a dashboard.
- 3. Limit access to fleet yards** – A yard surrounded by a tall fence and patrolled by security teams will not be very appealing to a thief. The most secure parking areas limit the locations where vehicles can enter and exit, and include gates that can only be opened by a physical key, an electronic card reader, or a member of the security team.

A few extra physical barriers such as well-placed rocks or other landscaping features will also make it harder to cut through the fence and drive through an otherwise-hidden area of the property.

- 4. Aim the cameras** – Active security cameras can monitor activities throughout a fleet yard, and will record valuable evidence of any crime. The most helpful details will be recorded when a lens is aimed directly at a yard's gate, offering a tight view of licence plates and drivers alike. Extra lighting will reveal facial features and scare away the thieves who like to work in the shadows. Fleets which store 30 days worth of video recordings will also have the chance to review any unusual activities that may have occurred before the freight was stolen, possibly identifying other people who were involved in the crime.
- 5. Guard the data** – Cargo manifests and other details about a shipment can be as valuable as a key when someone is deciding when and where to commit a crime. It is why drivers and other employees should not discuss the contents of a trailer with anyone. Inside the fleet office, paperwork can be kept under lock and key to limit access to information about shipping times and locations. And office teams who shred old documents before discarding their paperwork will also keep valuable details out of the prying eyes of contracted cleaning crews.

- 6. Add the devices to track stolen loads** – Trailers and trucks fitted with low-cost GPS tracking devices could be located before thieves have a chance to unload the cargo. At the very least, these devices can make sure abandoned equipment is located and recovered as quickly as possible.
- 7. Check employee backgrounds** – Criminal background checks do not need to be limited to cross-border drivers. The research into every newly hired employee can help to identify potential thieves in your midst. A few calls to a job candidate's supplied references might also reveal surprising details about why someone really left their previous employer.
- 8. Encourage safe practices on the road** – Truck drivers have an important role when protecting the cargo during a delivery. When looking to park in a truck stop or another storage yard, it is best to park in a well-lit area whenever possible, and avoid leaving equipment in unsecured settings like the parking lot of a local strip mall.

They are all relatively simple steps, but they offer proven strategies to fight crime. By using two or more of these tips together you will significantly increase your level of protection.

