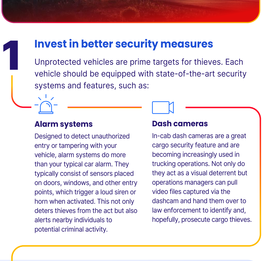
10 essential strategies to protect your trucks from cargo theft

As the saying goes, it's always better to prepare for the worst. While hopes are high that cargo theft will stabilize, carriers can take proactive measures now to deter criminals and minimize the impact of theft on their drivers and businesses if incidents happen.



1 Invest in better security measures

Unprotected vehicles are prime targets for thieves. Each vehicle should be equipped with state-of-the-art security systems and features, such as:

Alarm systems

Designed to detect unauthorized entry or tampering with your vehicle, alarm systems do more than your typical car alarm. They typically consist of sensors placed on doors, windows, and other entry points, which trigger a loud siren or horn when activated. This not only deters thieves from the act but also alerts nearby individuals to potential criminal activity.

Dash cameras

In-cab dash cameras are a great cargo security feature and are becoming increasingly used in trucking operations. Not only do they act as a visual deterrent but operations managers can pull video files captured via the dashcam and hand them over to law enforcement to identify and, hopefully, prosecute cargo thieves.

2 Conduct thorough background checks

Trustworthy drivers are essential to ensuring the safety and security of your vehicles.

Conduct background checks during the initial driver hiring process and periodically throughout an employee's tenure. Regular screenings help ensure that drivers maintain their trustworthiness and are compliant with company policies and industry regulations.

3 Train drivers on cargo security protocols and teach theft response strategies

Emphasize the importance of vigilance and maintaining awareness while on the road.

Educate drivers to recognize suspicious behavior. Teach them common indicators of theft such as loitering near the vehicle, attempts to access the vehicle, or erratic behavior.

Encourage your drivers to prioritize their safety, avoid confrontation whenever possible, and cooperate with law enforcement.

4 Encourage open communication and reporting

Open communication channels between drivers, dispatchers, managers, and security personnel is important for maintaining the safety of your cargo. Have drivers report to their superiors periodically throughout their shift or at the end. If something suspicious happens, drivers should notify managers as soon as safely possible.

5 Use secure parking and storage facilities



Drivers should park in secure areas that are equipped with surveillance cameras and perimeter fencing whenever possible. If you own your storage facility or parking area, install safeguards such as motion-activated lighting, to discourage criminal activity. Storage areas should be securely locked and preferably gated.

When your drivers visit a truck stop, stress the importance of always locking their vehicles and carrying the key with them when stepping away from the vehicle. For overnight parking, advise them to choose well-lit, heavily trafficked areas with surveillance and strong pedestrian presence.

6 Optimize routes to avoid problem areas

Route planning software can be a saving grace for drivers, especially those who operate in higher risk areas. Use routing technology to create a delivery course that intentionally avoids areas known for cargo theft.

Paired with **telematics and GPS technology**, route planning tools give you more control over operations and the safety of your drivers.

7 Conduct regular maintenance and inspections

Regular vehicle maintenance is an important part of OTR safety. Implementing a proactive maintenance program ensures that trucks remain in good condition. This reduces the risk of breakdowns and accidents and, subsequently, unnecessary downtime that could lead to cargo theft.

Also, make sure your drivers have a system for reporting vehicle issues before they become a major problem. Have them inspect trailers and cargo containers for signs of tampering or unauthorized entry before each trip.

8 Invest in insurance coverage that meets your business needs

Insurance coverage is a fundamental part of operating a trucking business — especially when it comes to protecting against the threat of cargo theft. Here are some factors to consider when choosing an insurance plan:

Shop for comprehensive insurance coverage

This type of coverage typically includes non-collision events such as theft, vandalism, hijacking, and other forms of criminal activity that may result in the loss or damage of cargo during transit.

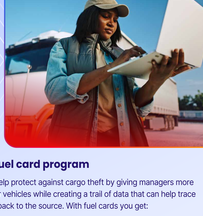
Customize the insurance policy

Work with your insurance provider to customize an insurance policy that meets the needs of the business. Tailored policies take variables into account such as:

- The type of cargo being transported
- The value of goods at risk
- Shipment frequency and distance
- Geographic regions vehicles serve

9 Listen and learn from your community

Your wider community can help spread awareness of potential threats, acting as an added layer of protection on the road. Collaborate with other businesses to share information about recent attempted theft or suspicious activity and engage with law enforcement agencies to stay informed about any emerging threats.



10 Enroll in a fuel card program

Fuel cards can help protect against cargo theft by giving managers more control over your vehicles while creating a trail of data that can help trace criminal activity back to the source. With fuel cards you get:

Transaction monitoring and alerts

Fuel cards with real-time monitoring features allow managers to track transactions as they occur. Unusual purchase patterns, such as fuel bought far from the planned route, can trigger alerts and prompt managers to investigate and potentially identify unauthorized vehicle use that could indicate a cargo theft attempt.

Purchase limits

You can set limits on the amount of fuel that can be purchased, where it can be purchased, and even the time of day when purchases are allowed. This reduces the risk of drivers making unauthorized stops, which could lead to cargo being targeted by thieves.

Driver identification and PINs

Each driver is typically assigned a unique PIN or card. This system can prevent unauthorized individuals from purchasing fuel.