

2024

Theft Prevention Guidelines



SDSA

Load Planning Part II

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Stolen freight in the trucking industry has been on the rise and is posing significant challenges for supply chains.

In addition to traditional cargo theft tactics, thieves have adopted more sophisticated and strategic methods to fraudulently obtain cargo. They use technology to pose as legitimate carriers or brokers to secure a load, but they intend to unwittingly involve an unsuspecting driver to facilitate freight fraud while remaining untraceable to law enforcement agencies.

As a broker or a carrier, ensuring the safe and secure transportation of cargo is crucial to your business's success. To help safeguard your business, we have compiled freight theft tactics to watch for, tips to prevent becoming a victim, and ways to recover from freight fraud should the unthinkable happen.

Freight Theft Tactics

Brokers and carriers have reported various methods used to steal freight, and understanding the tactics of cargo thieves can help you prevent it from happening.

Here are a few examples:

- **Straight theft** is when cargo is stolen straight from the carrier at a truck stop or somewhere along the route. Trailers with no security deterrents are often the most targeted. The truck and trailer might be unattended for a short amount of time but for professional thieves, it doesn't take long to unload cargo and disappear. This type of theft directly impacts carriers, but the consequences are far-reaching and impact the carrier, broker, and shipper.
- **Strategic theft** most commonly occurs as double-brokering. A scammer transfers a load from one freight broker to another, without proper authorization. Double-brokering is illegal and hurts a legitimate business's finances and reputation. Thieves also know Fridays mean tight shipping deadlines and lax vetting processes. Continue to vet all carriers and brokers thoroughly to avoid gaps in security.
- **Cyber-attacks** happen when any information about employees (drivers, warehouse workers, brokers, etc.) is accessed or intercepted by bad actors, often resulting in identity theft. Some owner-operators or brokers have also reported their business information being hacked and used in double-brokering scams or other strategic thefts.

Where is cargo theft most common?

The most common areas where cargo thefts occur are:

- Parking lots
- Commercial buildings
- Highways
- Truck stops
- Unsecured yards

When is cargo theft most likely to occur?

Most thefts occur between Friday and Sunday, with frequency spikes over holidays.

How do you mitigate the occurrence and impact of cargo theft?

There are several best practices that drivers can use to help avoid being involved in a cargo theft:

- **Verify credentials.** For brokers or carriers, make sure the contact information you have matches what is on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) websites. Double-check that contact information is valid and email addresses and phone numbers are accurate.
- **Establish security guidelines and clear communication.** Carriers and brokers should add security guidelines to all contracts to protect themselves from vulnerability—and liability. These should include ensuring high-value freight is kept in a secure, limiting the time its left unattended, and using strong, secure trailer door locks.
- To prevent in-transit theft, you should establish security guidelines and load requirements for the carriers moving your freight. Use your surroundings to better secure your trailer, such as using certain locks, not leaving trailers unattended for a specific amount of time, parking overnight only in secure locations, or parking in positions that can prevent theft, such as facing the trailer door toward a fence or wall of a building to block anyone from opening the trailer, park in well-lit, heavily traveled areas and look for security cameras.
- If your vehicle has to be left unattended, make it as short as possible; lock it up and take the keys.
- Try to have enough hours and fuel to drive several hours after initial pick-up before stopping to deter thieves from targeting your load.
- When you return to the truck, scan the area for suspicious persons or vehicles and adjust to the situation.
- **Check carrier ratings and industry reputations.** Brokers should utilize onboarding and monitoring solutions, to carefully select quality carriers. Verify the contact information is legitimate by calling the phone number listed and checking addresses. Virtual phone numbers—like a Google phone number with no physical address attached to it have a high correlation with freight fraud.
- **Use digital security.** Make sure you can track the load in real-time. The trucks must have GPS tracking or hauling device to monitor movement from pick-up to delivery.
- Eliminate stops within 300 miles of origin sites. Reports show that this is a common area for theft. Keep your drivers on the road as much as possible and help prevent theft.
- Advise carriers to be especially vigilant while at rest areas within the first 50-100 miles from the pick-up location, because some thieves will survey shippers to see when carriers are picking up loads and then follow drivers with the intention of stealing goods when the driver makes a stop
- Pay extra attention to loads that may require a layover (e.g., local shipments that pick up on Friday and deliver on Monday or over holidays can be targets for theft)
- Be wary of carriers willing to move a load for an extremely low rate compared to the industry standard as this may be a sign of a scam
- Implement red zones. Similar to the above, instruct your drivers to avoid stray gravel parking lots that have low visibility or are unpopulated.
- **Use physical security devices.** Use devices such as air cuff locks, landing gear locks on the trailer and locks on the rear door.
- Be vigilant on holidays. Major cities and transportation hubs see an increase in thefts over holidays. More thefts occur on Fourth of July weekend in In Texas, California, Florida and Tennessee than any other day of the year. Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving also tend to see a rise in thefts.
- Don't discuss your load or where you are going with anyone who does not need to know.

- If you think you are being followed, slow down and allow the vehicle to pass you. If that doesn't work, get off at an exit that offers a safe haven to see if the vehicle follows. Call local law enforcement and report the incident if you are still suspicious. Then call your supervisor and find a safe and secure area to park.
- Use theft deterrent devices to help secure your freight if applies
- Be aware and follow any specific company policies and procedures about security and preventing cargo theft.
- Carriers should exercise great caution when sharing information related to their cargo, schedule, or route.
- Additionally, be cautious when posting on social media. Thieves will sometimes comb social media to determine a trucker's location

MAKE A HABIT OF INSPECTING YOUR EQUIPMENT

When making the typical stops associated with a route, take time to inspect your truck and trailer for signs of tampering, including:

- Damage to locks or other security devices
- Signs of strain on trailer or truck doors
- Scratches or markings near door handles

If any of these signs are identified, exercise extreme caution. Do not delay any repairs necessary to locks or other security devices.

Freight theft is becoming increasingly common and sophisticated in today's industry. Despite theft's sharp rise, carriers can prevent crime by guarding their information, parking in safe lots, and maintaining a watchful eye on their equipment.