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# LOADED AND LOCKED

## Cargo security investment worth the expense of preventing costly theft

BY JASON CANNON

**C**argo theft statistics firm SensiGuard recorded 592 U.S. cargo thefts in 2018 worth an average of \$142,342. The fourth-quarter holiday season was particularly active with 171 thefts.

“There’s three principals of cargo security,” says Michael Nischan, vice president of transportation and logistics risk control for Epic Insurance Brokers and Consultants. “Secure the truck, secure the facility, and the less who know, the better.”

But despite all that money sitting on the dock or on a trailer, and the relative ease in which protective measures can be implemented, many carriers have a lackadaisical approach to security, Nischan says.

“The biggest problem I see with the cargo and equipment theft problem is sort of like personal health,” he says. “It’s that companies don’t want to deal with it. They’re either turning a blind eye to the situation, they think they’re immune for whatever reason, or they just don’t want to take the time or the energy or make the financial investment to combat the problem.”

### Analyze what you’re doing

Asset security strategies can vary, and according to Nischan, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. But the first step in addressing needs, he says, is evaluating current practices.

The logical place to start is how people access the property and cargo. Nischan says security gates and door latches often are secured using inadequate and inexpensive consumer-grade locks.

“You’re wasting your money,” Nischan says. “[Fleets] think they can go down to Home Depot or Lowe’s or any hardware store and just go to the locks section and buy



Fontaine Parts Connection offers a line of products to help secure heavy-duty vehicles and freight. The line includes a “clean hands” kingpin lock, dashboard locks for the brake valves, locking nuts for the wheels and gladhand locks to help keep trailers from being disconnected and moved.

any lock, and the problem is solved.”

“A lock only keeps an honest man honest,” adds Gerry Mead, executive director of innovations for Phillips Industries.

As simple as locking capabilities sound, technology has carried them a long way. Jacob Peterson, East Coast sales for National Fleet Products, says his company’s app-based UFO Cloud Lock allows fleet managers to monitor and record who opens and closes a vehicle door, and when and where it happens.

» **EDITOR’S NOTE:** THE FOLLOWING STORY IS PART 2 OF A THREE-PART SERIES ON “MEDIUM-DUTY TRUCKS.” APRIL’S INSTALLMENT COVERED **LOW-ROLLING-RESISTANCE TIRES**. JUNE’S COVERAGE WILL HIGHLIGHT NEWS AND NEW PRODUCTS FROM **SPRING TRUCK SHOWS**.



**National Fleet Products' UFO Plus Lock for rear and side vehicle doors is engineered to lock automatically when the door is closed, improving security compliance and operator convenience. The lock's stainless-steel body is drill-resistant, and its flush-mounted dome-shaped design makes it difficult for tools to get a grip.**

The lock also can be engaged or unlocked remotely, and from the platform's back end, managers can text-message digital keys to employees who may need temporary or one-off access. It relocks automatically when the door is closed.

"From the fleet perspective, they're looking for forced compliance," Peterson says.

Using the system's geofencing capabilities, a vehicle's cargo area can be rendered inaccessible between points, he says. Access can be granted to cargo recipients or at designated destination points along a route.

But a high-quality lock only will deter theft to a degree, and if it fails, a thief now has access to the trailer and what's inside, making loading dock security important.

"When a trailer is positioned at the loading dock, the trailer becomes an extension of the facility," says Ken Bowman, director of marketing for Rite-Hite. "Cargo theft doesn't just happen on the road or at truck stops. It can happen anywhere."

Rite-Hite's Dok-Lok secures the trailer to the dock. The device not only prevents the trailer from moving during loading and unloading but also serves as

a visual deterrent. By immobilizing the asset, Dok-Lok lessens the likelihood that it will be taken, according to Bowman.

Dok-Lok also can be integrated into the facility's existing alarm system and programmed to activate when tampering is detected, just as the alarm would sound if a would-be thief kicked in the front door.

In instances where trailers aren't dropped at the dock, devices like Phillips Connected Technology's Trailer Lock-Down can lock the air brakes when power is disconnected from the tractor. To release the brakes and pull a trailer, a PIN code from dispatch has to be entered from a smart device that can communicate with the control box, Mead says.

While less sophisticated, kingpin locks are inexpensive yet effective tools for preventing unauthorized coupling.

And while security cameras – what Nischan calls "one of the simplest tools" for companies to acquire – aren't a deterrent, they are helpful after the fact in an investigation.

"We live in a world now that surveillance cameras are just everywhere," he says. "This is a very simple, very accessible tool. [Cameras] maybe don't deter the crime, but we can at least get useful information, suspect description, vehicle description ... something that's of use in an investigation later to secure prosecution and conviction."

#### **What if the thief succeeds?**

If a thief has beaten perimeter security and the security on the loading dock, carriers have to start thinking about asset recovery, because that unit – and its load – is gone.

Telematics-enabled security devices aid with recovery by reporting trailer location to the carrier. Sensors are critical aids following a theft, but they're only helpful if they're not discovered by the thieves, Mead says.



**Bolt Locks are designed to secure tools, gear, trailers and other equipment. A single ignition key can be programmed to open any number of locks, reducing the need for multiple keys.**



**Transport Security's Enforcer Seal Guard Lock is a hasp and trailer seal protector designed to prevent unauthorized seal removal and tampering while in transit. The self-contained lock is made from hardened steel and has a corrosion-resistant stainless-steel surface. It is engineered to be mounted onto existing trailer latches.**

"I've been involved in several cargo theft issues where we pinged the trailer, and it got us right to our sensor, but they'd simply removed it and threw it in a ditch, while our trailer was moving down the road somewhere else," he says. "A thief will find a way to defeat any device, so you have to think outside a thief's realm, and one of the best ways to defeat them is going covert and hiding devices that they can't easily get to."

A good base-layer of covert cargo security, Mead says, is a GPS-enabled sensor with an accelerometer that can be hidden easily in a wiring harness.

"You've got to have a hidden-away GPS unit, a covert one," he says. "You can have your regular one on the side, but you've got to have something that's hard for them to get to and isn't easy to defeat."

GPS capability can help with recovery, and the accelerometer triggers an alert when it senses the trailer is moving, allowing for the theft's discovery earlier. Telemetry-based security sensors also can set up geofences, Mead says.

"Movement inside the geofence is good, but any movement outside the geofence triggers an event, but really you want [notification of] some kind of movement, period," he says. "When you're talking about a \$5, \$6 monthly pill to swallow [in monitoring fees], but you get base location on your units and you get to know when they move, that's the first part of security, knowing where your asset is, and second, knowing if it's doing what it's supposed to."

Full truckload thefts accounted for the most thefts by event type last year, at 74 percent of all cargo thefts, according to SensiGuard.

"Lose one trailer, and you pay for a lot of those [monitoring] devices," Mead says, adding that monitoring fees can vary to upward of \$18 per asset per month for more all-encompassing packages.

### What's being stolen?

For the first time in a decade, electronics were the most-stolen product type last year, accounting for 20 percent of all thefts. Electronics thefts rose 33 percent from 2017, overtaking food and drinks and home and garden products for the top spot.

Food and beverage products continue to be targeted because of their low price points. They also are hard to trace because of a lack of barcodes and RFID tags, and the goods – or, in this case, the evidence – usually are consumed quickly.

Nischan says being proactive in monitoring theft patterns and continually evaluating internal defense programs are important parts of an anti-theft initiative.

"If you think your company is all set, that you've done everything to address the risk, be aware that may change in three months," he says. "That may be something that evolves seasonally or as the market changes, but it's good to regularly review and test your programs to identify areas for improvement."

Being seen as an easy target can have implications other than simply the loss of assets and loads. While carriers with a solid anti-theft program may not realize an immediate reduction in insurance premiums, a reduced number of incidents eventually could lead to overall savings.

"Your premiums will improve over the long term," Nischan says. "However, there are insurance companies that from time to time will recognize or partner with a vendor, and they will offer preferred pricing for those technologies."

On the other hand, inadequate security measures – such as using ties when locks would be more appropriate – expose the carrier to greater potential liability.

"If I'm the guy who's supposed to be getting the load, I'm going to sue the pants off that carrier and say their security methods were negligent," says Brad Klepper, president for Interstate Trucker, a trucking law firm. "They're clearly below the standard of care for the industry. Using zip ties to secure your trailer isn't getting it done, so you're negligent in doing that, and you're li-

**"Lose one trailer, and you pay for a lot of those [monitoring] devices."**

– Gerry Mead,  
executive director of innovations, Phillips Industries



## EQUIPMENT: CARGO SECURITY



**AMG-Security Technology's CarPro-Tec GPS Plus is a wireless anti-theft alarm system with a room volume sensor programmed to register any change in a tractor or trailer's volume to detect another person, while a motion detector registers all movements in the trailer's interior. If an attempt is made to steal the tractor-trailer, a gyroscope sensor registers the truck's change in position, prompting an alert.**

able to me.”

Nischan says the key to deploying an effective anti-theft defense strategy is setting clear goals.

“It’s not necessary to turn your facility into Fort Knox with night vision and barriers and guards and IDs and policies and procedures and all these extravagant things at once,” he says. “That’s not how it works. If you go through an assessment process and begin studying

what you’re doing, how you’re doing it, what your risk is, what your commodity is, and then utilizing some simple tools to begin managing your processes, you can build a foundation from there. But you have to start somewhere.”

### What about the driver?

Drivers don’t have a lot of say in their company’s anti-theft strategy, but they play a critical role. Nischan says vehicle inspections, along with precise monitoring of hours-of-service status, are good measures that keep the truck moving and reduce the likelihood of theft.

“Make sure the company has good pre-trip and post-trip inspection processes, good loading and unloading processes, that [the driver] sticks to maybe a 200-mile red zone – doesn’t stop within 200 miles if it’s a high-target type of commodity – those types of things all in unison,” he says. “It’s up to that driver to follow policies and procedures, to be consistent and to never make exceptions.”

An analysis of theft data during Thanksgiving week last year by cargo theft recording firm CargoNet showed that the highest number of thefts occurred on Wednesday when many drivers parked their trucks before the holiday. Many of those thefts occurred in areas that were less occupied over the break, such as warehouses, parking lots and truck stops.

California was home to the most reported thefts in 2018, accounting for 26 percent of total thefts for the year. Texas claimed the second spot with 15 percent of total thefts, followed by Florida with 11 percent. Illinois and Georgia rounded out the top five.

Nischan says when working through security measures, fleets should be mindful of where drivers stop for rest breaks and ensure that the driver has sufficient food onboard to limit the times they would need to stop for snacks and drinks.

Regardless of what security measures a fleet deploys, it’s important to take all perceived threats seriously.

“[If] there is ever any question about a driver who feels he’s being followed, or maybe he approaches his destination, it’s late at night, and there’s a vehicle parked not far from the facility with a few folks inside, and it looks out of the ordinary, maybe just don’t stop, and keep going,” Nischan says. “If it looks unusual, always follow your gut, and at least investigate. You can trust, but verify.”

As far as personal protection goes, concealed-carry and Second Amendment rights currently are among the hottest of political buttons. But a carrier’s firearm policy could trump a company driver’s personal right to carry a weapon, regardless of what the Constitution says.

“That’s really [the fleet’s] property, and they have the right to determine what their policy is with regards to trucks and firearms in the vehicle,” Klepper says. “That is company property.”

There’s also the consideration of crossing state lines with a firearm. Just because a driver is licensed to carry in one state, those rights don’t carry over universally in every state.

While the Second Amendment is federal, how it’s applied within each state is up to the states themselves, Klepper says.

“If you’re going to start carrying in your truck, you better know what your carrier’s policy is and the laws of each and every state you’re going to roll through,” he says. **ccj**



**Autoventions' Trailer Sentry is a Bluetooth-enabled cargo security device designed to allow the user to lock a trailer and cab through a proprietary combination of hardware and software. The device is in a fully enclosed case that bolts to the frame rails underneath the trailer/cab and is passcode-protected through a mobile app.**

## Liftgate electrical assembly

Phillips' Weather-Tite M2 liftgate electrical assembly has a dual pole plug connection that offers added corrosion protection and is interchangeable with a standard J3082 liftgate dual pole socket. The unbreakable noncorrosive plug housing is molded to the electrical cable, and the company's moisture-blocking Weather-Tite seal at the front of the plug helps keep contaminants from entering the socket cavity, impeding corrosion from developing and traveling past the union inside the socket and into the liftgate's electrical system. Assemblies are available with heavy-duty jacketing in straight and coiled versions and come in varying lengths with a choice of two- or four-gauge fine stranded copper wiring.

» Phillips Industries, [www.phillipsind.com](http://www.phillipsind.com),  
800-423-4512



## TPMS display monitor

TST's Full Color Wide Screen Display is designed to monitor tire pressures and temperatures and is engineered to work with all existing sensors. It can manage a psi range from 0 to 214



and report tire pressures while the truck is stationary or in motion. The display uses audio and visual alerts to notify the driver of a problem, and an autosensing feature allows the monitor to be adjusted for the load being hauled.

» Truck System Technologies, [www.tstruck.com](http://www.tstruck.com), 770-889-9102

## Truck weighing instrument

Fairbanks' FB2560 Instrument incorporates faster processing power, expanded USB capabilities, an updated operating system and more memory than its predecessor FB2558 truck weighing device. The FB2560 maintains the same feature set, including setup, calibration methods and user-friendly web interface. The device has a processor speed of 1.83 gigahertz quad core with 4 gigabytes of memory and five USB ports: three USB 2.0, one USB 3.0 and one that can be used with a keyboard. The external display uses a Digital Video Interface-1 (DVI-I) connector.



» Fairbanks Scales, [www.fairbanks.com](http://www.fairbanks.com), 800-451-4107



## Shift protection system

Marmon-Herrington's Safe Shift Protection System is a proprietary electronic control system engineered to prevent damage to axle, driveline and transfer case components caused by improper operation. The system monitors vehicle conditions through the chassis CAN bus and is designed to prevent improper shifting through onscreen feedback. Other features include power-takeoff protection and the potential to run at faster baud rates for future system advancements.

» Marmon-Herrington, [www.marmon-herrington.com](http://www.marmon-herrington.com), 800-227-0727

## Spill kit

Eco-Absorbent's Large Truck Kit spill response package contains plugs and putty to temporarily plug fuel tank punctures, along with other items needed to address unexpected fluid spills. Designed as a "green" spill response package, the kit includes one bag of Eco-Absorb, 10 hazmat absorbent pads, three hazmat absorbent socks, one large and three small wooden plugs, a 10-ounce container of putty, two pairs of gloves and a disposal bag.



» Eco-Absorbent Technologies Inc.,  
[www.eco-absorb.com](http://www.eco-absorb.com), 866-820-8050