

Cargo theft prevention: driver's responsibility.

Cargo theft continues to grow across North America. Thieves have become more brazen in their efforts which put drivers' lives at risk, particularly during hijackings. While everyone in the shipping industry is responsible for preventing truck and cargo theft, drivers bear the main responsibility as they are in control of the load.

Hijackings.

Allegedly, the famous bank robber Willie Sutton, when asked why he robbed banks, replied "because that is where the money is." Cargo thieves adhere to this same principle. To ensure they steal valuable, easy-to-fence cargo, they monitor warehouses that contain these items. It is common practice for thieves to follow trucks out of these facilities, wait for the truck to stop, then steal the truck and/or cargo, sometimes assaulting the driver in the process. To prevent this from happening, drivers should:

- Look for occupied vehicles that are parked outside the shipping facility, particularly within view of the facility gates and entrances. Most criminal surveillance occurs within a mile of load origin.
- Look for following vehicles, particularly a group of adults riding together or a group of vehicles driving in a pack. Vans, pickups, SUVs, and bobtail tractors are frequently used.
- Watch for vehicles that seem to slow down in front of you quickly. Accidents or breakdowns are often staged to get truck drivers to stop along the roadway. Don't let yourself get boxed in. If you feel you might be hijacked, try to keep your truck moving. Be especially cautious on freeway on- and off-ramps as these are hijack-prone areas.
- If you feel you are being followed or are forced to stop, call 911 immediately.
- After picking up your load, drive for at least 200 miles or four hours before stopping. It is less likely that thieves will follow you that far. This means you need to ready your vehicle (inspect, fuel, etc.) and yourself (restroom, meals, etc.) prior to picking up the load.



Loaded, dropped trailers are prime targets for thieves. Never drop a trailer in an unapproved, unsecured location!

- Alternate your routes so you are not predictable.
- Only discuss your cargo, route, and destination with those who need to know. Often, thieves use insiders such as dock workers, maintenance personnel, waitresses, fuel desk attendants, etc., to identify high-target cargo.
- If your truck is being hijacked, do what you need to do to protect your own safety.

Parking.

Most cargo theft occurs after a trailer has been dropped in an unsecured area, a truck has been left unattended, or a driver is asleep in the truck. To reduce these thefts:

- Plan routes to ensure truck stops and rest areas are reputable. Do not park in abandoned lots or other isolated locations while waiting to make deliveries or sleeping.
- Schedule runs so loads can be delivered when the facility is open. Thieves often monitor dark and secluded areas around facilities in the early morning, before gates open, looking for drivers who have arrived early and are sleeping. Consider parking in safer areas and driving to the facility when open.

- Park in well-lit areas. Back trailer doors up against buildings and fences to make it difficult for thieves to open trailer doors.
- Never leave your vehicle running with the keys in it; shut off the engine and lock the doors. Always padlock your cargo doors with high-quality locks.
- Dropping a loaded trailer in an unapproved, unsecured area should never be done; it is the most frequent way thieves steal cargo. If you must drop a truck and/or loaded trailer, notify dispatch and use security devices such as kingpin, airbrake, and glad-hand locks.
- If driving in teams, one driver should remain in your vehicle at all times.



Arrive at destinations when they are open so you do not have to park in unsafe areas.

Theft of partial loads.

To reduce partial theft and shortages drivers should:

- Verify load quantities when picking up the load. If multiple deliveries are made, ensure the correct cargo is removed at each location. Count your load at each stage.
- Ensure each load is sealed and the seal number is written on the bill of lading. Drivers should carry their own seals to use when the shipper does not have their own. When the load is delivered, the consignee should document that the seal has not been tampered with before the seal is broken.



Thieves stole five boxes from this container then resealed it so it looked undisturbed. When picking up the container the driver noticed the fake seal number did not match the number on the bill of lading, relieving him of responsibility for the missing cargo.

- Ensure the seal number is correct. A recent ploy by thieves working at shipper locations is to break into a preloaded, pre-sealed trailer and re-seal the trailer when done. If drivers do not verify that the seal number matches the one on the bill of lading, they will likely be held responsible for the missing cargo when delivered.
- Check trailer doors, seals, and locks each time you return to your truck to ensure nothing has been disturbed. The above ploy of resealing your trailer can occur at truck stops and rest areas as well.

Drivers should be particularly cautious when operating around ports and large metropolitan areas due to the presence of organized theft rings. Top cargo theft states include: AL, CA, FL, GA, IL, IN, MD, MI, NJ, PA, and TX. Base metals, food, beverages, electronics, and apparel are the most frequently stolen cargo. Drivers should report all thefts and suspicious activities to authorities immediately.

Providing solutions to help our members manage risk.®

For your risk management and safety needs, contact Nationwide Loss Control Services: 1-866-808-2101 or LCS@nationwide.com.