

Transport Security – Protecting your business

Risks and countermeasures

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If your business provides tangible objects which have value to customers, then you can be sure that these have value to thieves and other miscreants who want to make a profit out of your hard work. Even if your business is principally involved in the transport of other people's goods, you are still going to be a target of interest to modern-day "highwaymen."

Although it does conjure images of Dick Turpin supply chain thefts are still surprisingly common place with thieves targeting both high-value goods (controlled drugs, electrical goods, alcohol, cigarettes and so on) as well as stealing the vehicles themselves – in 2011, the ACPO Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service reported that the Ford Transit van was the most stolen vehicle in the UK.

Unfortunately, as there is erratic reporting about this sort of crime (and some businesses are reluctant to make their losses public), it is difficult to determine a probability of loss within the UK specifically. However, FreightWatch International reported that during the Thanksgiving – Christmas holidays in 2010 there had been a 28% increase in incidents on a day-by-day basis over 2009 (as reported by Cargo Security Internationalⁱ, 2011 figures not yet available) and globally cargo thefts (including hijackings) have increased around 10 – 15% year on year (as reported by CNNⁱⁱ).

The same CNN report indicates that this crime is costing industries around US\$30 – US\$50 billion every year and while this is likely to be skewed by very high risk areas such as South Africa, Brazil and Mexico, it shows that there is going to be a strong motivation for criminal elements to target cargo carrying vehicles – ships, trucks and aircraft.

Unfortunately, all too often cargo theft is seen as almost victimless – it is a loss to faceless corporation and frequently, in the UK at least, robberies are carried out without violence. In Spain, criminals have perfected a manoeuvre which allows them to steal the cargo out of moving vehicles without the occupants being aware (reported in Logistics Handlingⁱⁱⁱ)

For the owner of the cargo or vehicle, things are very different.

AXA^{iv} reported in 2009 that the average insurance claim made by UK businesses was over £4000 and rising at about twice the CPI rate. This is supplemented by the previously

mentioned report in Logistics Handling which stated that while the number of reported thefts was down, the value of each loss had risen sharply.

Taken in overview, this shows that there is a genuine concern for any organisation which relies on getting physical products to customers and that the proper application of good security principles can drive genuine business benefits and protect valuable assets.

As with most security work, every situation is going to be unique and will require an assessment based on the situation at hand. However, there are really only three locations where thefts can take place and each should be considered in terms of what risks your business faces and what measures you can take to reduce these risks.

Zones of Attack

At the Depot. Although we are talking about transport security here, a significant proportion of cargo thefts take place at the storage depots. This is frequently the result of cargo being loaded on to trailers and then left for long periods before being picked up for delivery. Here, good security controls include the normal range of physical security measures (manned guards, CCTV, lighting, patrols etc.) as well as making sure that there are no overt markings on the trailers which indicate the contents. Employees should be made aware of the need to report suspicious activity (which can include social engineering attacks and is frequently an indicator that criminals are carrying out reconnaissance) and if the value of your cargo justifies it, you can consider specialist security measures to prevent even small thefts.

On route. This can be the hardest part of the chain to secure, but if you do it properly, it makes it the hardest place for the criminals to attack your cargo. Where possible your vehicles should never carry livery which signifies their value to attackers (this may cause problems with corporate branding, but this should always be a risk managed decision). You should also try to ensure that your deliveries are varied in both routes and timings – again, this can cause problems when you have tight schedules to maintain, but if you establish a pattern you are instantly an easy, interesting target for criminals. If your cargo value justifies it, then you need to make sure your drivers are taught how to spot if they are being followed (counter-surveillance training is a good security lesson for all employees) and what

to do if they are, or worse if they are actually robbed. You should also have clearly defined policies, and practiced plans, for how management should react in the event of a cargo robbery – even if it is just a simple process to notify the cargo owners and alert PR teams.

At the delivery point. When your cargo arrives at its destination, it is not fully “safe” until it is handed over to its new owner and all your obligations are fully discharged. Frequently there is still a significant risk of robbery in the last few moments – this is especially true with Cash in Transit deliveries but applies to all goods – and this is often the time when everyone’s guard is at its lowest. Your delivery drivers are normally tired after remaining alert on the journey and it feels like the “job is done.” Lots of the security measures you have developed for the rest of the journey still apply but it is critical that your staff training enables your team to continue to apply them. If you are delivering to a customer, it may be good practice to ensure that the contract hands over security responsibilities at a clearly defined point and this is certainly the case if you are providing deliveries to high risk regions.

Additionally, with transport security, it is worth considering technological controls such as GPS tracking on cargo containers, even using devices which are preprogrammed with a route and can kill the vehicles engine if there is a deviation (probably not a great idea for aircraft, but this can be effective in trucks). The key here is to ensure that your security maintains many overlapping layers of security so that one breach doesn’t leave you, and your cargo wide open.

If you would like to talk more about how transport security relates to your business, or would like specific advice on making sure you can minimise the risks of robbery, then get in touch with our specialist security consultants and we will be glad to discuss all your issues.

About Halkyn Consulting

Halkyn Consulting Ltd is a specialist security consultancy based in North Wales, experienced in providing security advice to local, national and international clients including government agencies, multinational corporations, small businesses and homeowners.

For more advice on how to properly use passwords or any other questions you may have related to security and protecting your home, business or other assets, you can reach Halkyn Consulting at www.halkynconsulting.co.uk or info@halkynconsulting.co.uk.

ⁱ <http://www.cargosecurityinternational.com/channeldetail.asp?cid=16&caid=12863> – retrieved 2 April 2012.

ⁱⁱ <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/11/business/cargo-crime-highway-robbers/index.html> – retrieved 2 April 2012

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.logisticshandling.com/absolutenm/templates/article-critical.aspx?articleid=1568&zoneid=22> – retrieved 20 March 2012.

^{iv} <http://connect.axa.co.uk/commercial/broker-insight/slight-decline-crime-11-06-10> – retrieved 2 April 2012.