

Cargo Crime



Reducing crime through partnership and prevention



Cargo crime is big business and criminals are lured by potentially high rewards, plentiful opportunities and the fact it is perceived as a relatively low risk crime.

The true extent and impact of cargo crime is distorted by a lack of reliable and consistent data, it is important that all crimes are reported to the police so that an accurate picture of offending trends and locations can be formed.

This guide has been produced in conjunction with the National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (NaVCIS).



NATIONAL VEHICLE CRIME
INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

What's in this guide

Click on the items in the interactive menu below to jump to that section.

TOP TIPS

- Always secure your vehicle
- Have a security and delivery policy in place
- Keep delivery details private
- Do not make unnecessary stops
- Always report crimes to the police

Cargo Crime



Cargo Crime Overview

The reality is that cargo crime not only poses a threat to the goods you carry, but your own personal safety and ultimately, if we are not able to curb the trend of increased cargo theft, to your livelihood.



Cargo at rest is cargo at risk

Incidents of load theft are highest at night, whilst vehicles are parked. Carefully plan where you take rest breaks and where you will park overnight.



Securing your vehicles

If your vehicle is fitted with security devices, take the time to understand how they operate and what your responsibilities are, do you need to apply a lock or set an alarm?



Load area seals

It is common for tamper evident seals to be used on load area doors, if you stop at any point enroute, you must check the status of the seal before commencing your journey once again, this will alert you to any potential security breach at the earliest opportunity.



Delivery policy

Be clear about what paperwork is required. Who is responsible for unloading, do you need to be in attendance for the unloading process at all times? You should remain vigilant and mindful of deception techniques. Ensure that you are delivering to the exact location specified.



Security policy

Does your employer (or company for whom you are driving) have a security policy in place? If you do not know or are unclear about any of the requirements, be sure to seek clarification from your manager.



Keep details private

Cargo criminals can learn a great deal from social media accounts, quickly piecing together information to potentially identify targets. When using social media sites do not share any information about your cargo or location.



Take precautions and protect your safety

Make sure you are protecting yourself, do not neglect to do the basic things well. Never leave your vehicle unattended with keys in the ignition (unless instructed to do so for operational reasons), lock vehicle doors, (including cab doors when you are inside), never pick up hitchhikers and only leave your vehicle when required.



Plan ahead

Ensure you have sufficient driving hours to reach the intended destination and/or secure parking location. If not, discuss alternative arrangements with the traffic office at the earliest opportunity. Also ensure you have sufficient fuel to complete your journey wherever possible, thus reducing the need for additional or unnecessary stops.

Cargo Crime



Truck Stops & Secure Parking

The biggest determining factor in minimising risk of cargo crime is the choice of parking location. The risk posed to your vehicle and its cargo increases exponentially the moment you stop, with 63% of cargo crime occurring when a vehicle is parked (away from a depot or known facility).

Unfortunately, with a lack of available truck parking spaces both in the UK and into Europe, identifying suitable rest areas can be challenging, with specific secure truck parking in even shorter supply. It is therefore vital to plan ahead; identify your route, schedule rest breaks and where you will stop, ensuring you will have access to facilities you may require (e.g. WC, shower, food, etc.) and consider contingencies in the event of disruptions.

Over time you will build up a knowledge of suitable parking locations but utilise driver resources (such as those listed below) so you are aware of any closures or new sites that may open.



Carrier policy

Be clear about the carriers policies e.g. Are there specific or preferred locations? Are you permitted to use motorway services? In addition, are there any restrictions i.e. lay-bys. Also establish what you are carrying, is it a hazardous, high-value or vulnerable load?



Personal safety

Ensure your phone is fully charged and has a signal – being able to raise the alarm in an emergency is vital. Always let someone know where you have parked, whether this is your traffic office or a relative and always lock doors when in the cab.



Legalities

It may seem obvious but ensure that it is legal to park in the chosen location. Are there time constraints or are you restricting access? Is there suitable access for your vehicle (size, weight restrictions)?



Visual checks

Ask yourself if the location looks safe? Are other vehicles parked there? If not, why not? Look for graffiti or any evidence of criminal damage in the local vicinity, which may indicate that it is not appropriate.



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Cargo Crime



Truck Stops & Secure Parking (continued)



Take precautions

When leaving the cab, always lock the doors and keep your vehicle keys on you at all times. When returning to your lorry, check for signs of any interference. Record your checks accordingly.



Stay vigilant

Be alert to threats. Watch for suspicious activity and report concerns to the police or your traffic office as soon as it is safe to do so.



Identifying a location

Always park in as safe and secure a location as possible, avoid dark and secluded areas. Identify locations that may offer security fencing or CCTV. Where CCTV is present, ensure that you are within sight of the cameras.



Payment

Familiarise yourself with your carriers / employers arrangements for payment of parking fees. Do they utilise a pre-paid account or are you required to pay? If so, try to avoid carrying cash and instead use a debit or credit card.



Defensive parking

Be mindful to park defensively to minimise risk of criminal activity. If possible, park close to another vehicle or obstacle preventing doors from being opened. Also, be alert to the risk of fuel theft, park in such a way that protects and blocks access to fuel tanks, if parking in lay-bys, ensure the fuel tank is exposed to the traffic, thus making it more difficult for the thief to stay hidden.

Cargo Crime



Hijackings and Theft from Moving Vehicles

It is an often-held misconception that cargo crime is a victimless act. Whilst it is true that hi-jacking's and cases of violence are comparatively rare, it would be wrong to suggest it does not happen or to ignore the threat completely.

In the case of hi-jacks, these extreme tactics are generally associated with attempted heists of high-value loads. Perpetrators involved with attacks of this nature can be expected to implement well-choreographed operations; the use of signal jammers is common practice, where their use is intended to create a temporary veil by preventing a monitored tracking system from sending alerts about route deviation, unscheduled stops or other suspicious activity.



Remember the basics

Lock and secure your vehicle before embarking on your journey, keep windows shut, and adjust mirrors to give you the best possible view. Do not stop for hitchhikers or to help motorists in trouble (this could be a ruse).



Remain vigilant

Watch for suspicious vehicles or unusual activity. Are you being followed? Have you seen the same vehicle before? If you suspect anything, make a mental note of any details (location, vehicle make etc.), if you have CCTV remember the time so footage can be reviewed.



Mobile phone

Ensure that your mobile phone is fully charged before departure and keep it about your person (not on the dash or in the vehicle).



Route planning & variation

Hijackers target specific routes and loads, becoming familiar with regular movements and schedules. Consider varying the routes and times for undertaking certain journeys, especially if they are in or around known hijack hotspots. Where possible opt for routes that are on main motorways or highways covered by CCTV, which are less attractive to criminals.

Another extreme tactic that is gaining greater notoriety is that of 'theft from moving vehicles.' As implausible as it may sound, the technique involves the use of specially equipped vehicles that enable criminals to closely follow a truck or trailer during transit. The perpetrator then climbs onto the bonnet, opens the truck doors (often grinding through external locking equipment) and boards the vehicle, before off-loading contents to an accomplice behind. Initially this threat was treated with a degree of scepticism but ominously is becoming more prevalent.



Vehicle security

Guarding against hijacking is difficult but do ensure you are familiar with and trained in the use of any vehicle security systems that are present; for example panic alarms can help you to covertly raise the alarm if you are suspicious of certain situations or are under attack.



Check your mirrors

Cases of theft during transit are difficult to spot as they are conducted in your blind spot. Watch for vehicles that appear to be following you, especially if they get too close. Perpetrators may use grinding equipment to open doors, so if you notice sparks, move lanes immediately.



Rest breaks

Do not make un-necessary or unscheduled stops. Where feasible, only stop in pre-determined rest areas, ideally specific lorry parks or truck stops.

Cargo Crime



In the Event of a Hijack

Do not attempt to resist. Follow instructions without resistance and do as the hijackers ask. Remember that assailants are usually armed and dangerous. Raise the alarm at the first opportunity and try to provide as much detail about your attacker and their vehicle as possible. If you are concerned about any suspicious activity during a journey, contact your traffic office immediately and seek a safe place to stop.



Bogus Police & DVSA officers

In an effort to stop drivers enroute, criminals have been known to impersonate police or DVSA officers (Drivers and Vehicle Standards Agency), often in replica vehicles. It is also commonplace for persons utilising this tactic to create a temporary diversion or road closure to minimise risk of detection.

Genuine officers usually stop vehicles in marked cars and they should have no objection to being asked to verify their details. You should be mindful that failure to stop for a genuine officer is an offence; thus, if you are suspicious about their identity, exercise caution. Look for signs or anomalies e.g. does the uniform appear genuine, are they wearing appropriate footwear etc.

If you are suspicious of the persons asking you to stop, you can keep your engine running, doors locked and windows closed until you are sure that they are genuine. Only ever pull over in a safe, well-lit, public place.

If you have a vulnerable load card, use it and follow the instructions opposite.

Use of dangerous or vulnerable load card

Follow the below steps if you are suspicious about the identity of the police or DVSA officer whom has stopped you:

1. Ensure that your vehicle doors are locked, stay in your cab, keep the engine running, and secure the parking brake.
2. If you are in contact with your operating centre, tell them your location and the reason why you have been stopped.
3. Ask the officer to verify whom they are by an ID warrant card. If you are carrying a vulnerable load card, show them. It states that you are under instruction not to open the vehicle until you have confirmed their ID (name, number and station).
4. Dial 101 (if you are suspicious or concerned that you may come under attack, dial 999), tell the police what vulnerable/dangerous load you are carrying, your location, and the officer's ID. The officer will also contact the police control room to inform them that they have stopped you.
5. If it is a legitimate stop, by uniformed officers in a marked police vehicle, follow the officer's instructions.



Cargo Crime



Always Report Crimes to the Police

Always report crime and creditable suspicious incidents to police. This allows police to capture the evidence of a crime or understand the full scale of the incident which maybe a pre requisite to a crime, which in turn ensures the right resources and tactics can be used to tackle it.



**When a crime is taking place,
dial 999 in an emergency.**



Helpful resources

Police recommended security products can be found at www.securedbydesign.com

If you have any information around persons involved in cargo crime, or to notify of a cargo crime contact freight@navcis.police.uk

