



Transport Risk Management



Protecting trucks and cargoes from theft

4. Vehicle tracking and alarming systems

Truck operators, cargo owners and insurers are suffering rising losses following increasing numbers of thefts and hi-jacking of trucks and their cargoes across the UK and Continental Europe. Total costs of losses are unknown due to many incidents going unreported to the authorities but it is estimated to be several billion Euros/Dollars for each European nation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimated in January 2003 that worldwide thefts of cargo amounted to USD50 billion.

To help combat these incidents and to aid the recovery of stolen goods and vehicles a number of vehicle tracking and monitoring organisations now exist in the UK and across Europe. These organisations generally use 'Telematics Systems' technology which usually comprises a vehicle control/management monitoring device(s) capable of communicating either via GSM mobile phone networks (digital text messaging is often used) or satellite communications and using GPS (Global Positioning System) satellite positioning data. Frequent truck position data together with information relating to speed and direction of travel is transmitted to a central monitoring station. Usually vehicles are equipped with a concealed panic button for the driver or sensors on cargo or cab access door locks which can issue an 'alert alarm' to the monitoring station. Other parameters can be included to cause an 'alert' eg. if a refrigerated vehicle's machinery goes out of the desired temperature range or the vehicle diverts from a pre-determined routing. Upon receipt of an 'alert' the central monitoring station follows agreed procedures to help establish if an illegal act is being committed before calling upon the local police authorities to become involved and help stop the hijackers and recover the vehicle and/or goods. Some of these tracking organisations are reporting very high success rates due to good relationships built up with local police forces, improved success rates for criminal theft prosecutions as well as a fall in theft activity in some areas. Other business benefits are that for the larger transport/logistics operations these systems can be used as a business management tool as cost and efficiency data can also be derived and analysed across a fleet of vehicles.

We recommend that these systems should be considered especially whenever goods of a high value, theft-attractive nature are being carried by road. Costs can be as low as a few £'s/Euros per week per vehicle, but we recommend the following be checked when considering such systems:

- Ensure appropriate coverage with area to be transited with specifics of any 'blind spots/nil coverage areas'
- Ensure operator has full multilingual capability with local police when transits involve crossing country borders
- Obtain examples and success rates from operator when 'alerts' are received
- Ensure the telematics system used is tailored to your operational needs and the types of goods being carried



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