

Marine: Goods in Transit – Vehicle and Trailer Security

This Loss Prevention Standard provides guidance to reduce the risk of theft, unauthorised access, and freight/cargo loss by promoting security controls for the movement of goods.

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Introduction

Goods Vehicles and trailers are a critical control point within the road transport element of a supply chain and are frequently targeted by criminals with varying levels of sophistication. Whether attached to a vehicle, parked at a facility, or left unattended during transit, trailers may present opportunities for criminal exploitation if not appropriately managed, maintained and secured.



This Loss Prevention Standard (LPS) outlines common trailer-related risks and recommended security considerations to reduce the likelihood of theft, unauthorised access, and cargo loss. It focuses on trailer condition, suitability, and security measures.

Note: This Global Loss Prevention Standard relates to goods in transit vehicle and trailer security and is focussed on asset/ cargo loss prevention and related risk management guidance. It is not intended to address Liability/General Liability or motor insurance related exposures. The presumption is that all local regulatory territory requirements, and compliance with national/local security regulations, codes, or standards take precedence and have, or will be, met. The recommendations in this document are intended to supplement, not replace, local requirements.

General Guidance

Goods Vehicles should be considered security assets and managed proportionately to the risk presented by the cargo being transported, the environment in which they operate and the duration they may be left loaded or unattended. Where the risk classification of inventory increases due to the desirability or value of the product, the level of security controls applied to the trailer should increase accordingly.

Loaded Vehicles and Trailer: Vehicles carrying cargo should be treated as potential theft targets and subject to heightened situational security awareness. Attention should be paid to trailer condition, locking mechanisms, seal integrity (where used), and the suitability of the trailer type for the cargo being transported. Loaded trailers should not be left unattended unless appropriate, risk-based security measures are in place.

Where practicable loaded trailers within business premises should be secured in line with locally agreed security requirements. This is recommended to be positioned against an available building bay or to the nearest point to the building under clear coverage of Video Surveillance Systems (VSS). Where practicable, avoid parking near perimeter fencing/ boundaries.

Empty Vehicles and Trailers: Empty vehicles remain vulnerable to misuse, unauthorised coupling/ removal, or pre-positioning for later criminal activity. Where practicable, empty trailers should be secured, parked in controlled areas, and monitored, especially if their status could be misinterpreted as loaded, or if they are located within known high-risk areas.

When empty within the business premises, where safe and operationally feasible, doors to be secured and left in an open position to aid quick visual inspections when security perimeter patrols are ongoing. Unattended trailers in publicly accessible areas remain vulnerable, even when empty, and may be stolen for use in further criminal activity, including the transport of stolen freight.

Understanding the Risks

Trailers are frequently targeted due to the ease with which they can be accessed, moved or interfered with, particularly when controls are misapplied or inconsistently enforced.

Common risk exposures include but are not limited to:

- Inappropriate trailer type selection for the cargo being transported, increasing the likelihood of unauthorised access or damage.
- Trailers being left loaded and unattended for extended periods without adequate physical or procedural controls.
- Physical security weaknesses such as inadequate door hardware, compromised curtains, or unsecured king-pins.
- Unauthorised coupling or trailer theft, particularly where pre-loaded trailers are parked in unsecured locations.
- Limited visibility of trailer status, location, or condition, reducing the ability to detect tampering or interference.
- Poor condition or lack of inspection, allowing evidence of attack or attempted theft to go unnoticed.
- Curtain slash thefts, a known and prevalent modus operandi affecting curtain-sided trailers, resulting in unauthorised access and removal of cargo.

Collectively, these exposures can increase the attractiveness of trailers to criminals and raise the likelihood of both opportunistic and targeted theft incidents.

Managing the Risks

The choice of trailer is determined by the type of cargo being transported and factors such as weight and volume, the method of delivery (e.g. long-distance or last-mile operations), and how the freight will be loaded, such as via loading docks or side access using forklift trucks.

Smaller/ lighter loads being transported over shorter distances are typically best suited to 3.5t to 7.5t box vans or panel vans, whilst larger loads being transported over longer distances will generally be best suited to larger HGV Vehicles and trailers. Each type of trailer will present strengths and weaknesses, and these should be fully reviewed and considered against the information contained within this standard when selecting. Mitigations are recommended as best practice guidelines and should be appropriately layered with other risk management controls dependant on the inherent risks.

Trailer inspections

Trailers should be inspected routinely for damage and to ensure all locking mechanisms are in working order. Attention should be given to roof ventilation points and flooring, as these areas are known ingress points that can go unnoticed and facilitate the removal of cargo.

Inspection best practice includes:

- Documented checks prior to each use by the driver, supported by more in-depth inspections conducted by nominated personnel on a weekly basis, and,
- An embedded audit process to capture, record, and review inspection findings and any identified damage or security concerns in a timely manner.

Trailer Type

Hard-Sided Trailers: Provide robust physical security against theft as well as increased protection against poor weather and accidental impact damage. For this reason, hard-sided trailers should be selected for transporting High Value Theft Targeted (HVTT) cargo and may be a stipulation of the consignor or consignee. The construction and design of this type of trailer allow for additional security measures to be incorporated or installed, such as heavy-duty, high-security locking devices on compartment doors – see later section on Vehicle and Trailer Security.

Curtain-Sided Trailers: By their design and construction, curtain-sided trailers can be vulnerable to physical attack through the side panels, including curtain slashing using a bladed article to gain access or view loaded cargo. There are limited options for enhancing physical security; however, whilst these trailers offer operational flexibility, in their standard format they are not suitable for the transport of high-value theft-targeted (HVTT) or damage-susceptible cargo.

Van Type

Box/ Panel Vans. commonly used for last-mile and local deliveries and may present increased security risk due to lower physical attack resistance and frequent stop-start activity. Their use should be risk-assessed based on cargo value, attractiveness, and operating environment. Where higher-risk or theft-attractive cargo is transported, fully enclosed, hard-bodied vans with appropriate locking and electronic security measures should be used. Vans should be secured when unattended and parked in controlled locations wherever practicable.

Physical Security

Security Seals: Seals being applied to loaded vehicles/trailers are to be aligned with the guidance provided in international standard [ISO 17712 Freight Containers - Mechanical Seals](#), which specifies single-use, tamper-evident, and pass rigorous strength tests to prevent cargo theft, such as holding a minimum breaking strength. Additionally, seals must be clearly marked with a unique serial number. Spare seals should be kept secure and numbers centrally logged.

Hard-Sided Trailer/Rigid Trucks Security Locking Devices. Trailer compartment doors can be secured with heavy-duty, high-security locks to provide additional attack resistance to factory-fitted only fixtures. These locks are individually tailored to the type of trailer door, such as barndoor (split rear doors that open outwards) or up and over shutter designs and can be installed both on the door interior and at high-level to be less accessible to criminals.

- Manual locking devices are predominantly traditional mechanical key assemblies, also providing a visual deterrent but can be more vulnerable to physical attack than automatic locking devices.
- Automatic locking devices can be internally mounted, making it harder to physically attack them, and do not need the driver to engage them given the slam-lock design.
- Automatic locking devices can also utilise multi-point locking applications to further resist physical attack.

All Trailers: Unsecured trailers are vulnerable to unauthorised coupling/ movement, particularly when criminals know that they are pre-loaded and unsupervised. Physical locks secured to the semi-trailer kingpin or Suzie locks to the brake airline can protect against such unauthorised coupling and removal.

Shipping Containers. Also known as cargo transport units (CTUs), these are inherently hard-sided and therefore provide robust physical security against theft as well as increased protection against poor weather and accidental impact damage. However, securing the container doors can be problematic, especially as these are often leased units and end-users are not at liberty to make alteration. Where allowable, container door locks can be fitted to the locking bars to clamp these together, with a metal shroud providing a physical obstruction to the securing close-shackle padlock.

Electronic Security

Electronic security measures can enhance visibility of trailers and cargo during transit and when stationary, supporting timely detection of unauthorised movement, route deviation, or interference. These systems should be viewed as complementary controls that assist with monitoring and response, rather than standalone theft-prevention solutions. Their effectiveness is influenced by monitoring arrangements, alert management, and defined escalation procedures. This should be supported by clearly defined ownership and accountability for monitoring and response activities.

Tracking Devices. GPS tracking devices can be installed to both trucks and trailers, providing remote monitoring of their location. Where deployed, tracking systems may support situational security awareness by enabling the monitoring of vehicle and trailer movements against planned routes, geo-fencing locations, identifying unauthorised deviations or unexpected dwell periods, and assisting with recovery efforts in the event of theft. Consideration should be given to device placement, power resilience, signal availability, and the level of monitoring provided, particularly for higher-risk cargo movements.

Cargo Compartment Alarm Device. Cargo compartment alarm devices are designed to alert when unauthorised access to the trailer or load space is attempted or achieved. These systems may include door-opening sensors, intrusion detection, or alarm activation linked to the trailer structure or locking mechanisms.

Where fitted, cargo compartment alarms can act as both a deterrent and an early-warning mechanism, particularly during stops, parking, or periods when the trailer is unattended. Their effectiveness is dependent on correct installation, routine testing, and defined response actions once an alarm is triggered. Alarm systems should be aligned with operational procedures to ensure alerts are acted upon in a timely manner and do not generate unnecessary false activations that could undermine confidence in the system.

Key Actions

- Select trailer types appropriate to the cargo risk, journey profile, and operating environment, with higher-risk or theft attractive cargo assigned proportionately higher security controls.
- Treat loaded trailers as attractive targets and apply heightened situational awareness, particularly during dwell, parking, or periods of reduced supervision.
- Avoid leaving loaded trailers unattended unless appropriate, risk assessment-based security measures are in place and approved.
- Conduct routine and random recorded trailer inspections at variable intervals to identify damage, tampering, or security weaknesses, including checks of doors, locks, roof vents, and flooring prior to use.
- Supplement driver daily checks with periodic in-depth inspections by nominated personnel and record findings through an embedded audit or inspection process.
- Use hard-sided trailers for high value or theft-attractive cargo wherever practicable; avoid the use of curtain-sided trailers for HVTT cargo.
- Apply security seals to loaded trailers where appropriate, using seals aligned to recognised standards, and verify seal integrity and numbers at handover points.
- Secure trailers against unauthorised coupling when unattended or pre-loaded, including the use of physical Suzie / king-pin lock protection where risk warrants.
- Manage empty trailers as security assets, ensuring they are secured, parked in controlled areas, and monitored, especially in higher-risk locations. Avoid leaving trailers at roadside, on industrial Estates, or other publicly accessible areas.
- When empty trailers are located within business premises, leave doors secured in an open position where safe and operationally feasible to aid visual inspection.
- Deploy electronic security measures, such as GPS tracking or cargo compartment alarms, proportionate to risk and supported by defined monitoring and response responsibility.
- Investigate and escalate any evidence of tampering, forced entry, alarm activation, or deviation from planned controls in line with incident reporting arrangements.
- Consideration should be given to incorporating complementary security and theft-prevention features when specifying trucks, trailers, and bodywork at the procurement stage for new vehicles or during refurbishment of the existing fleet.

Checklist

A generic **Trailer Security Checklist** is presented in Appendix 1 which can be tailored to your own organisation.

Contact Information

United Kingdom

Please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or email us at riskadvice@aviva.com. To speak to one of our advisors, call 0345 366 6666.*

*The cost of calls to 03 prefixed numbers are charged at national call rates (charges may vary dependent on your network provider) and are usually included in inclusive minute plans from landlines and mobiles. For our joint protection telephone calls may be recorded and/or monitored.

Canada

Please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions | Aviva Canada](#) or email us at arms.canada@aviva.com

Ireland

Please visit [Insurance Risk Management | Business Risk Management Insurance - Aviva Ireland](#) or Email us at armsireland@aviva.com

Specialist Partner Services



Aviva have created a network of Specialist Partners to complement our in-house capabilities and to enable our policyholders to benefit from a wide range of risk management solutions at preferential rates and terms. Together, we provide solutions to help with the significant challenges of modern-day risk management.

These partner relationships are wholly for the benefit of our policyholders with no income to Aviva.

The following Specialist Partners provide products or services in relation to risk guidance provided, discussed or referenced in this Loss Prevention Standard.

United Kingdom

Trailer security locking devices [Maple Fleet Services](#),

Ireland

Not applicable

Canada

Not applicable

For more information please visit: [Aviva Risk Management Solutions - Specialist Partners](#)

Standards, Sources and Useful Links

United Kingdom

Canada

Ireland

Other

- [ISO 17712 Freight Containers - Mechanical Seals](#)

Loss Prevention Standards

These documents set out best practice recommendations to help reduce the likelihood and impact of losses.

Please visit [Loss Prevention Standards](#) to view the full library.

Aviva Risks Training Solutions

Aviva Risk Training Solutions, delivered through our Specialist Partner, SafetyCulture, provide free, bite-sized learning modules exclusively for Aviva policyholders.

Please visit [Aviva Risk Training Solutions](#) for further guidance.

Appendix 1 – Vehicle & Trailer Security Checklist

Location	
Date	
Completed by (name and signature)	

	Trailer Security Checklist	Y/N	Comments
1.	All owned or leased trailers are visually inspected to confirm they are free from damage, signs of tampering, or security defects and are fit for their intended purpose.		
2.	The trailer type selected is appropriate for the goods being transported, taking account of cargo value, theft attractiveness, and journey profile.		
3.	Where high-value or mixed loads (including high-value items) are transported, hard-sided trailers are used wherever practicable.		
4.	Trailers are secured following loading, with doors, locks, and locking points checked to ensure they are correctly engaged.		
5.	Security seals are applied to all outbound trailer movements where inventory has been loaded.		
6.	When not in use, security seals are stored in a lockable container and audited in line with locally agreed security equipment audit cycles (e.g. daily or weekly).		
7.	Seal numbers are recorded and checked at loading and receiving points, with any discrepancies reported and investigated.		
8.	Where trailers are left unattended or pre-loaded, appropriate physical security measures (such as king-pin/ Suzie lock protection) are applied in line with risk.		

	Trailer Security Checklist Cont'd	Y/N	Comments
9.	Empty trailers are secured, parked in controlled areas, and monitored where practicable, particularly in higher-risk locations.		
10.	Trailer inspections, security checks, and any identified damage or concerns are documented and retained in line with local procedures.		
11.	Additional Comments:		

Please Note

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