

BEYOND GPS

The need for increased transport security

The security of a company's global supply chain often depends on an individual truck and its driver.

“Without a doubt, the weakest link within any supply chain is truck modality,” says Dan Purtell, Senior VP Supply Chain Solutions at BSI America Professional Services. “More than 80 per cent of the disruption—be it theft or the introduction of contraband such as stowaways or un-manifested cargo such as drugs—typically happens within the trucking realm.”

In his 20 years working in international supply chain security, Purtell has seen an important change toward incorporating more technology into security solutions as companies around the world strive to keep their goods safe from origin to destination and also meet US anti-terrorism regulations.

“The old rule of thumb was just escort it, put a pair of guys in either a marked or unmarked car behind the truck it and follow it from LA to Boston,” says Purtell. “But it’s so cost prohibitive to do that with rising fuel costs and rising labour costs, there came a point where you had to shift towards technology.”

Utilizing increasingly sophisticated Global Positioning Systems (GPS), the transport industry started collecting important information as to the behavior of any given truck. But GPS technology cannot, in itself, deter theft or other disruptions to the supply chain.

“GPS is not enough,” says Purtell. “In order to have an active deterrent, you need to have someone monitoring that truck. Somebody needs to be on the other end and say ‘Hey, that guy stopped for four hours or is taking an unauthorized route; I’m going to call and see what’s going on.’ That becomes a proactive, preventative-based solution.”

While a few companies in Europe and elsewhere offer more active deterrents, Purtell says he only knows of one company in North America, Magtec, that incorporates this heightened security service. “What Magtec offers, which in my opinion is unique out there, is the ability to monitor the truck and provide the customers the ability to shut down the truck.”

Over and above locating the truck, the Magtec system reports whether the truck is locked or unlocked, whether it’s moving, and if so, whether it’s moving where it’s supposed to be. “If you have a load that’s geo-fenced that is supposed to be going down the I-80 corridor and it’s one and a quarter miles off the I-80, they send an alarm and then they can shut it down,” Purtell says.

He predicts this sort of active deterrent will result in lower loss rates and a tremendous increase in recovery rates. Other Magtec features make it difficult to steal a truck in the first place. “The other beauty of the Magtec solution is you can get in it but you can’t drive it off,” says Purtell. “Even if you get in the cab, you have to have a pin code to start the truck, which is great.”

Purtell says freight is always at greater risk when it’s stopped, but he says increasingly, technology is offering solutions that can prevent theft and increase recovery of stolen goods, strengthening the security of global supply chains.

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