



CARRIERS CORNER

by Brian Oken

Truckers Get Aggressive With Cargo Security

The transportation industry has never been without challenges. It is an industry that is extraordinarily complex and vital to the economy. For the last three years, warnings of terrorist attacks via biological, chemical and strategic weaponry have been a fact of life with the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, a frightening reminder that no industry is impenetrable.

The intelligence industry has made us eerily aware of terrorist plots to use trucks as weapons of mass destruction. As an industry, motor freight carriers need to take all security measures to prevent possible attacks with the use of its trucks.

The efforts to maintain homeland security are of utmost importance. They may delay delivery time, increase costs, and create challenges within our industry, but homeland security is essential and cannot be overlooked. As an industry, truckers can no longer afford to be reactive. The key to ensuring the safety of drivers, cargo, and the people they share the road with is to take a unified stance and create a proactive plan of action.

DEVELOP A PLAN

The trucking industry is a potential target for terrorist attacks, and I'd like to encourage shippers to help increase awareness by asking their motor carriers to implement a security plan.

The plan include provisions aimed at improving communication with our drivers, upgrading training programs, and developing materials to reinforce the company's key messages. The following are some security tactics that can help your carrier proactively combat terrorism:

- ✓ **Issue a terminal access agreement** signed by outside carriers prior to entering your trucker's facility. This agreement serves as a pre-qualification to ensure outside carriers meet all policies and procedures. The outside party should also be held fully responsible and liable for all activities while on our facilities.
- ✓ **Lock and secure terminals** during non-business hours.
- ✓ **Double-check tractors, trailers, and container doors** to ensure they are securely locked before the terminal closes for the night.
- ✓ **Maintain two-way communication** with drivers to ensure tracing capability.
- ✓ **Train drivers to report any suspicious activities** to the local police and disclose information only to individuals with proper clearance.
- ✓ **Drivers should cable-seal tank cars** when they are not being unloaded and document all information.
- ✓ **Give drivers formal training** on important safety procedures.

In addition, while on the job, drivers vary their routes; park in areas where other truckers are present; avoid unsecured, dark, deserted areas; use reputable truck stops; avoid unnecessary stops; never pick up hitchhikers; and be constantly aware of their surroundings.

GET MANAGEMENT INVOLVED

Once your carrier has developed a safety and security plan, its procedures must become an integral part of company operations. For that to happen, buy-in at all levels is crucial or the process could break down, putting lives at stake.

In order to ensure company buy-in, commitment from the highest levels of management to support these security measures and articulate the policies to the staff. Managers need to hold regular meetings with drivers to ensure they are communicating and implementing all changes. All drivers' training manuals should also include any new guidelines and procedures.

The final element of any security plan upgrade isn't final at all. Carriers must continually reconsider and reevaluate the plan, making sure the drivers and staff across the board have the training and information they need to keep your company, your industry and our country safe.

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