

Managing Risk: support for business

Plant Theft

Last year, the theft of construction plant, including excavators, compressors and even cranes, surpassed £70 million. This, despite Government initiatives to encourage plant manufacturers to improve in-built security features.



It's estimated the UK construction industry loses more than £800 million a year when you account for other costs associated with plant theft. These include the cost of plant replacement, hire of replacement equipment, loss of business and increased insurance premiums. Thieves have also become more sophisticated, even posing as plant manufacturers' maintenance workers to remove vehicles from site.

Due to the tight deadlines of many construction projects, equipment needs to be immediately accessible and available. This has led to manufacturers designing plant with a single common key, leaving equipment on site open to any thief able to obtain a key. This is further exacerbated with keys being left in or near equipment, or equipment secured with too light a chain and padlock.

Thieves are attracted to plant because of the very low recovery rates – less than 10% – due to few identifying marks and a lack of registration documents. This makes it difficult for the police to identify and return stolen plant to owners.

In 2000, the Home Office set up the Plant Theft Action Group (PTAG). It brings together manufacturers, plant hirers, insurers and the police. It also includes The National Plant and Equipment Register (The Equipment Register – TER), a company that runs a national database of owned and stolen plant – designed to improve recovery rates. The work of the PTAG is having an impact, but the construction industry is key to reducing theft.

For construction companies, investing in security and TER registration can pay dividends. In fact, money spent on physical locking devices, covert ID marking, and effective site and depot security can be repaid many times through insurance discounts, reduced claims, and less downtime. These measures lead to fewer thefts, more recoveries and, ultimately, a lower cost to the industry.



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While we always recommend fitting immobilisers, there are other simple measures that will make life difficult for thieves:

- **Mark all equipment, vehicles, machinery and any easily removable parts with an ID number or unique mark**
- **Where possible, disable equipment by removing the distributor cap, rotor arm or battery**
- **To increase the chance of recovering stolen vehicles, use Construction Equipment Security and Registration (CESAR) devices, which provide covert and overt ID and registration**
- **Ensure you secure gates with robust padlocks or chains**
- **Consider installing CCTV cameras and pass copies of filmed thefts to the police**
- **Use heavy chains and good quality locks to secure equipment. Chain or lock items together or to trees or other fixed objects**
- **Use lockable fuel caps to prevent theft**
- **Put up warning signs to let potential thieves and trespassers know there are alarms and all equipment has been ID-marked**
- **Where possible, use sensor operated lighting on outbuildings or storage sheds**
- **Join a community-based watch scheme to share useful or important information**

