

## GROWING RISK

# CARGO THEFT SURGES AS CRIMINALS ADAPT

**C**ARGO THEFT in the U.S. is climbing at an alarming pace. After spiking nearly 50% in 2024, incidents are already up another 22% in early 2025, according to a new report from supply chain visibility firm Overhaul.

Criminals, both organized groups and opportunistic individuals, are not only stealing more — they're getting smarter and more aggressive in how they do it. For companies that move, store, buy or sell goods, the risks are mounting.

High-value items like electronics and everyday essentials such as food and beverages are being targeted at every stage of the supply chain, and no mode of transport is immune.

Here's a look at what's driving the rise, how theft methods are evolving and what companies can do now to reduce their exposure.

### Most common schemes

**Deceptive pickups:** Thieves impersonate legitimate drivers, often using forged documents or stolen identities to trick warehouses into releasing cargo.

**Facility theft:** Criminals target unattended or poorly secured warehouses and distribution centers, often at night or on weekends.

**Pilferage:** Instead of stealing full truckloads, thieves now remove parts of shipments slowly and discreetly over time — often without detection.

**Hijackings and coerced stops:** Some thieves use false emergencies or warnings to get drivers to pull over, then rob the truck.

**Commercial burglaries:** Thieves target storage sites such as truck yards or facilities near rail lines.

**Last-mile theft:** Criminals steal shipments during final delivery, often from parcel couriers.

**Driver collusion:** In some cases, drivers are paid to stage a hijacking or hand over goods, making background checks and employee vetting essential.

### Protecting your cargo

While no system is foolproof, companies can take steps to protect their supply chains and minimize losses. A layered security approach is key, combining physical infrastructure, technology and training. Consider:

**Fortifying warehouses and yards** – Most thefts happen when cargo is unattended. Securing your facilities with fencing, lighting, surveillance cameras, access control and intrusion detection systems can prevent both opportunistic and planned attacks.

**Auditing your vulnerabilities** – Regular threat assessments help identify weak spots before criminals do. Use external security experts to test your defenses and ensure your protocols are up to date.

**Vetting and training your team** – Background checks and strict hiring practices can prevent inside jobs. Make sure your employees know how to verify drivers, recognize suspicious activity and respond appropriately.

**Leveraging real-time technology** – Telematics, GPS tracking and video monitoring can help you monitor cargo in transit and respond quickly to threats. Visibility platforms also help spot early warning signs of theft, like route deviations or unscheduled stops.

**Using secure protocols at every handoff** – With impersonation and fake pickups rising, it's critical to verify identities, use two-step authentication for pickups and document every transfer of goods thoroughly. ❖

