



EUROPEAN  
RENTAL  
ASSOCIATION

# THEFT AND VANDALISM PREVENTION GUIDE

A document provided by the  
European Rental Association



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# Introduction

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**€500**  
million per annum

**30,000**  
units of heavy equipment

Damage or theft of equipment is a serious problem. Not only does the machinery that has been stolen or damaged cause issues, but it is also often the case that vandals force entry through fencing, doors or gates. By taking the correct measures, the risk of machinery being stolen or vandalised can be significantly decreased, helping to protect assets, avoid costly disruptions, and maintain operational efficiency.

Throughout Europe, **theft and vandalism has caused damages estimated at €1.5 billion per year** to the rental, construction and agricultural industries, as well as their customers. For the equipment rental industry alone, the European Rental Association (hereafter ERA) estimates the value of stolen equipment to exceed €500 million per annum. This figure includes **around 30,000 units of heavy equipment (3 tonnes and above) and estimated figures of 300,000 units below 3 tonnes.**<sup>1</sup> **Theft is becoming more prevalent, with emerging methods including fraudulent hire and the growing sophistication of organised crime networks.** The recovery rate of stolen equipment varies widely depending on the country and the security countermeasures deployed. Unfortunately, in many cases, stolen equipment is never recovered due to the equipment being moved outside the country, leading to further losses for rental companies. The recovery rate for equipment is significantly lower than that for other vehicles, such as cars.

Therefore, ERA recommends that you follow the practices and advice outlined in this document to protect the rented and owned equipment in the most efficient way possible. Preventive strategies like GPS tracking, secure storage, and access control systems can significantly deter theft and vandalism. The document is split into two sections. If you hire assets, then guidance is provided in the '[Customer Handout](#)'. If you own or rent out equipment, guidance is provided in the '[Rental Company Handout](#)'.

<sup>1</sup> All figures mentioned are estimates that only reflect the cost or value of stolen equipment and machinery. They do not account for the significant and often hidden costs associated with replacing that equipment, such as delays in the delivery or sourcing of replacement machinery, downtime, potential penalties, job losses, or even the failure of contracts. As a result, the overall total cost of theft to a company or organisation could potentially double or triple the estimated amount mentioned above.



## Customer Handout

Protecting equipment from theft and vandalism is crucial for minimising financial loss and avoiding operational disruptions for both consumers and rental companies. Thieves and vandals often take advantage of opportunities, but implementing effective preventative measures can significantly reduce these risks. This handout outlines key strategies to deter criminal activity and emphasises the importance of being vigilant, taking appropriate preventative actions, and responding promptly when necessary.

### 01

#### **Theft:**

Thieves are calculated. They make a trade-off every time between the potential profit and the risk of getting caught. By increasing the risk of apprehension, theft becomes less appealing. The likelihood of getting caught increases when:

- The theft takes more time to complete
- The thief is more visible or audible
- There are easier detection methods available (such as a GPS transmitter)
- Clearly displaying protective measures through signs on the equipment can deter thieves from attempting to steal it.

### 02

#### **Vandalism:**

Malicious damage to your or our equipment can take many forms, including graffiti, vandalism, and even arson. Although the perpetrators' motives differ, prevention measures against vandalism are similar to those against theft. Vandalism often involves acts of opportunity. To effectively reduce the risk, you can adjust the severity of your prevention measures based on the specific risks you face. For instance, if you notice a lot of graffiti in the area or operate in a nightlife district, the likelihood of vandalism is significantly higher. Effective prevention methods include installing fencing and proper lighting. Additionally, ensure that equipment is never left unattended to decrease the risk of further vandalism.

### 03

#### **Organisation:**

Educate and instruct your employees, and regularly review your internal processes to ensure they remain effective. Training new employees and periodically checking existing employees' knowledge and skills on your company's anti-theft or vandalism measures.



## Customer Handout

- Ensure appropriate storage and security solutions are used to protect the equipment (see [Appendix 3: Storage measures](#)).



*Heavy duty padlock on security fence*



*Heavy-duty track lock — prevents movement and theft of small tracked machines*

- Different types of equipment may require specific security measures based on their type, size, value, and level of risk (see [Appendix 4: Available systems and devices](#)).



- If you perceive something suspicious and out of the usual working practices, inform your supervisor immediately and contact the police.
- Act fast in the event of theft or vandalism, contact the police, and follow the local or regional guidelines for reporting the crime. Inform the rental company and your insurer.
- Ensure that your employees who will be operating the equipment are educated in theft prevention and review the appendices accompanying this document (see [Appendix 1: Education & Training](#)).



## Rental Company Handout

As an owner of equipment that could be stolen, you should take appropriate steps to ensure that your assets are protected as well as they can be. Thefts can happen from your depot and premises, not always from your customers or hirers' locations.

### Education and Training

Educate and instruct your employees, and regularly review your internal processes to ensure they remain effective. Training new employees and periodically checking existing employees' knowledge and skills on your company's anti-theft or vandalism measures (see [Appendix 1: Education & Training](#))

- If you perceive something suspicious and out of the usual working practices, inform your supervisor immediately and contact the police.
- Act fast in the event of theft or vandalism, contact the police, and follow the local or regional guidelines for reporting the crime.
- Follow best practices, including not leaving keys in machinery.
- Ensure that appropriate storage and security solutions are used to protect the equipment (see [Appendix 3: Storage measures](#)).
- Different types of equipment may require specific security measures based on their type, size, value, and level of risk (see [Appendix 4: Available systems and devices](#)).
- Join and work together with associations (like the ERA and or National Rental Associations) involved in plant theft fighting.
- Consider depot/premise layout to prevent easy access to windows or access points.



Security bars and poles — restrict access and deter unauthorised entry

## Rental Company Handout

### Fraudulent hires

Be aware of modern tactics employed by criminals, which are becoming increasingly sophisticated. These can include identity theft, the use of false documentation, and other fraudulent hiring practices designed to gain access to valuable equipment. It is essential to verify identities and credentials thoroughly during the hiring process. For more detailed guidance on recognising and preventing these risks, please refer to [Appendix 2: Fraudulent hires](#).

### Asset Technology

Technology is always advancing, and in theft prevention, technology can really help. If you own assets of all values and types, consider enabling them with the below systems or services, or possibly adding secondary or tertiary options to make it riskier for the thieves.

01

#### Telematics:

Most larger assets are fitted with some form of telemetry. This can help with business operations as well as tracking the asset when on site, so ensure the telemetry is working and fit for purpose before hire. Smaller assets may need to be fitted, and a commercial decision should be made based on risk. However, consider that telemetry fitted by the OEM is standardised, meaning it will be in the same location and could be isolated easily by knowing criminals. Other telematic considerations include:

- Adding extra secondary or tertiary telemetry devices that can help in asset tracking.
- Fitting non-powered or non-emitting devices which can be activated when needed.
- Consider fitting covert trackers where a recovery service is linked to the product.
- Consider fitting access control that uses smart card, RFID, or PIN number to operate/use.
- Consider how geo-fences or zoning can be set up to monitor unplanned asset movements.
- Consider adding alerts based on telemetry disconnection or unauthorised removal to detect a potential loss early.

02

#### Connected Devices:

Smaller assets can now be fitted with other types of connected products, which helps with asset management but can also point to early losses if managed incorrectly. Products include:

- Bluetooth tagging and Bluetooth beacons (creating a mesh network)
- RFID
- Wi-Fi-enabled devices
- Covert Trackers that utilise radio networks



## 03

### Asset Marking:

Correct asset marking is essential in ensuring that ownership of assets is known. Most hirers/owners will add an 'asset' number, but consider other ways to mark an asset as yours in case of loss or theft. These could include:

- CESAR tagging (or a similar anti-theft and registration system)
- DNA marking (on asset and in fluids)
- UV marking and micro-dotting.

Asset marking is particularly important in ensuring assets are returned to the victim of the crime. Poorly marked or non-identifiable assets, which are recovered by police authorities, are less likely to be returned.

## 04

### Support Product Offerings:

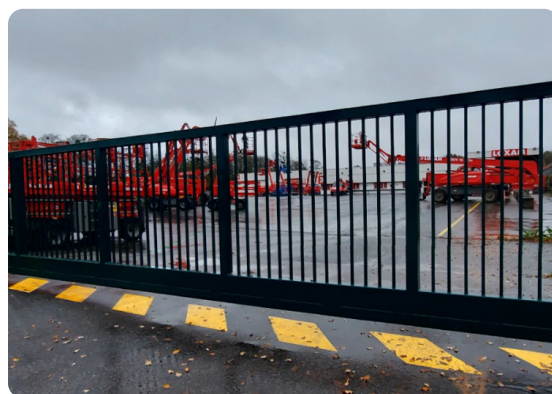
Offering a range of supporting products or advising your customers that they can source prevention methods will help make theft more difficult. Products could include the following. It would also be sensible that if your company does not supply these products, you offer them an alternative supplier.

- Padlocks, access control and lockable storage units
- Security fencing, gates and storage
- Mechanical Prevention devices like wheel clamps, locks, track blocks, etc.

For further information on recommended storage and security solutions, please refer to [Appendix 3: Storage measures](#).



*Mechanical eye lock for towing eye.*



*Make sure your plant is properly secured with gates to control site access.*



*Ensure that all areas are monitored to deter intruders and capture any suspicious activity.*



*Use a wheel clamp to prevent theft and unauthorised movement.*



## Appendix 1: Education & Training

Equipment theft is a very real problem, causing considerable harm and generating considerable criminal profits. Work together to promote security by educating the equipment users and companies on their personal responsibility regarding the security of equipment and where it is stored.

The advice in this appendix may help you establish an 'anti-theft culture' within your

company and show your anti-theft attitude to all of your stakeholders. Your employees must be fully aware of the importance of proactive anti-theft behaviour and know that there will be serious consequences if they do not comply with the rules your company has laid down; company policies and risk assessments should set this out. All users of rented equipment must know about the risks and dangers of equipment theft and how to fight it. As the customer, whether you are a company or an individual renting the equipment, you will be financially responsible for any lost equipment and the resulting delays in completing work on time.

### Company education and training

As a company, it is strongly advised to provide your staff with the following resources:

- Provide a list of theft prevention guides and working procedures for your employees according to your risk assessments (i.e. Physical, Electronic and Human).
- Provide anti-theft training and regular updates for your employees.
- Considering the significant cost that equipment theft could have on the company.
  - The training should be conducted regularly.
  - There has to be a strong focus on how to act and what to do to prevent theft.
- A nominated employee should act as the company's contact person on equipment security.
- Develop an effective 24/7 contact and emergency response in the event of equipment theft.

### Client education and training

Conducting a risk assessment and taking all appropriate measures to reduce the risk is essential. The following measures should be taken to prevent theft and or vandalism:

- Do not leave the equipment at high-risk/ unoccupied locations.
- Remove equipment from the site (or lock it into secure storage) when not in use.
- Secure the equipment together or to the road furniture.
- Always remove keys when equipment is not being operated (i.e. good key security).
- Remove the equipment from trailers.

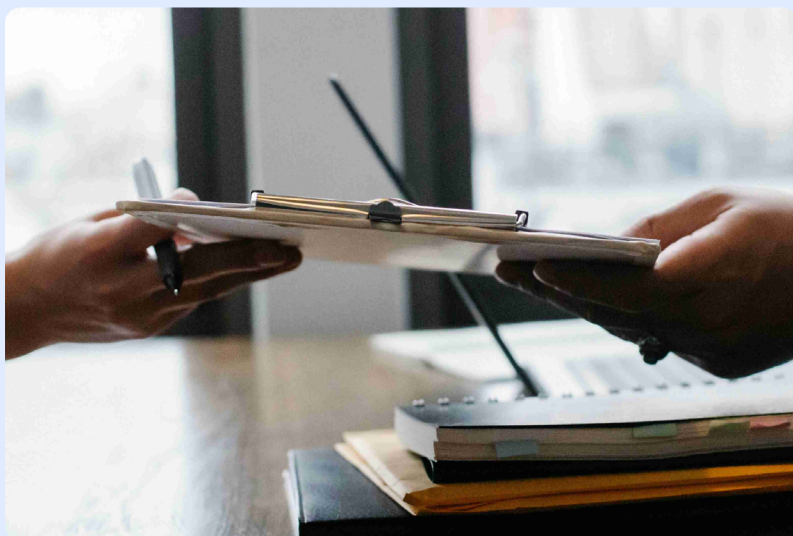


## Appendix 1: Education & Training

- Fit physical restraints.
- Ensure the driver/operator uses the security measures if available.
- Fit security devices such as portable (non-wired) theft recovery tracking products as an addition to already installed telematics and other installed tracking devices.
- Act fast in the event of a theft – Report to law enforcement, and if applicable, alert the 24/7 security providers' call centre.
- Use anti-climb measures.
- Use security fencing.
- Use anti-ram raid measures (including concrete blocks, high kerbs, etc.)
- Use on-site or remotely controlled CCTV systems linked to floodlighting.
- Fit cab screens to equipment.
- Place machinery in well-illuminated areas, preventing the machine from being put in remote dark spots.
- Remove accessories from machines that can be easily removed (e.g. control panel of AWP).

Make sure to inform your staff about the economic losses the company would incur in the event of theft or vandalism, as well as the overall negative effects on the business. If essential equipment is stolen, completing jobs correctly and on time becomes impossible. This will not only affect the company but also the stakeholders and organisations involved with the company.





## Appendix 2: Fraudulent Hires

Rental companies face more fraudulent hires. To prevent them, below we describe a four-step plan for “preventing fraudulent rentals” for a rental company in general. Ensure that your employees receive the necessary training and that company guidelines are well-known to them.

### 01

#### Step 1: Customer verification and screening

- Collect complete customer information: obtain the customer’s full name, address, phone number, and email.
- Verify identity: request valid identification and compare the photo and signature (linked to your local or national rules).
- Double verification for high-value items: require additional ID verification for expensive equipment.
- Check against fraud databases: cross-check potential renters in databases of known fraudsters.
- Verify business affiliations: Contact the listed company to confirm the renter’s authorisation.
- Email verification: scrutinize emails from free domains more thoroughly.
- Phone verification: call the provided phone number while the customer is still present.

### 02

#### Step 2: Payment and financial

- Require card payments for deposits: avoid cash transactions to maintain traceability.
- Increase deposits when in doubt: set the deposit to match the estimated resale value of the equipment.
- Be wary of unusual interest in deposits: excessive focus on deposit terms can signal fraudulent intent.
- Review outstanding balances and credit limits: ensure customers remain within their credit limits.
- Check account creation dates: be cautious with newly created or recently reactivated accounts.
- Monitor for multiple rentals across locations: watch for customers renting from several branches simultaneously.
- Look for mismatched equipment combinations: renting unrelated equipment may indicate fraud.
- Watch for frequent changes in contact details: frequent updates could signal fraudulent behaviour.

## Appendix 2: Fraudulent Hires

### 03

#### Step 3: Rental Request and pickup

- Verify the customer's story: ask about the rental's purpose and ensure the explanation is consistent.
- Check rental durations: be cautious of unusually long rental periods.
- Look for inconsistencies: differences between reservation details and pickup information may indicate fraud.
- Be cautious with urgent requests: fraudsters often create pressure to expedite rentals.
- Compare customer details at pickup: ensure the person collecting the equipment matches the registered renter.
- If you collaborate with external drivers, ensure you coordinate the necessary information effectively.
- Instruct your driver to contact you immediately if they notice anything suspicious about the customer, the delivery site, or anything else before leaving the equipment at the site.
- Record vehicle details: note the vehicle's license plate and verify its registration.
- Verify third-party pickups: do not release equipment to anyone claiming to collect on behalf of another without verification.
- Be alert to unusual behaviour: avoid rentals to customers showing evasive actions or excessive urgency.
- Use visual identification: take photos of the customer with the rented equipment at pickup.
- Always have rental contracts signed: ensure all necessary documents are signed by the collector.
- No handovers to couriers: do not release equipment to courier services unless arranged by the rental company.
- Verify vehicle documents for high-value items: request registration details for vehicles picking up expensive equipment.
- Limit access to high-risk items: implement additional approval processes for renting expensive or in-demand equipment.

### 04

#### Step 4: Monitoring, documentation, and reporting

- Document incidents: keep detailed records of suspicious customers and fraudulent activities.
- Track customer history: regularly review past rental transactions for unusual patterns.
- Use internal systems for reporting: utilise platforms to log and track suspicious activities.
- Share information internally: keep colleagues and other branches informed about potential fraud risks.
- Extra vigilance during high-risk times: be particularly cautious during weekends or periods of high workload when procedures may be overlooked.

## Appendix 3: Storage Measures

### 01

#### Location

The security of a construction site or company is the foundation of all safety considerations. A well-guarded location reduces the risks of theft and vandalism. To establish a strong security framework, the following measures are essential:

- Provide secure containers where equipment can be stored overnight.
- Safeguard the construction and company site with guard service, barriers/security fencing and/or video surveillance systems.
- Ensure your equipment keys are kept in a safe place. Develop internal delivery procedures for all equipment keys and security devices.
- Securely position, lock and link smaller equipment together.



Secure the doors of the container to prevent break-ins and unauthorised access.



Trailer hitch lock — prevents unauthorised towing and theft.



Full height revolving turnstiles.



Safety kit.



## Appendix 3: Storage Measures



Store small equipment securely inside a container to protect it from theft and vandalism.

# 02

## Plant equipment

Protecting equipment is essential to prevent theft and ensure operational efficiency. Implement the following measures to enhance security and asset recovery:

- Make use of mechanical anti-theft devices.
- Make use of mechanical or electronic recovery devices.



Secure perimeter fencing.



Heavy-duty track lock — prevents movement and theft of small tracked machines.



Mechanical eye lock for towing eye.



Use a wheel clamp to prevent theft and unauthorised movement.





Smart card

## Appendix 4: Available Systems, Devices, and Asset Storage

### Equipment immobilisation systems

With the current technology, various methods exist to immobilise a machine when it is not in use. Ask the rental company about the possibilities for your specific rented machine to reduce the likelihood of theft.

Plant security is improving. Many manufacturers have responded to customer pressure and are now fitting security devices to new equipment. DNA marking, immobilisers, unique keys and key fobs are placed on machines. Ensure that all monitoring systems are operational around the clock, 24/7.



JCB keypad



Trackunit activation keypad

## Risk Management

It is impossible to eliminate risk, regardless of your actions, completely. This is why you need a good insurance broker who understands your business. Along with sound risk management advice, a good broker will help you arrange insurance coverage that is available when you need it.

Insurance can seem expensive, but you can do many things to keep your premiums down without compromising on protection. Insurers give good discounts for strong, well-run businesses that pay close attention to health and safety, regularly maintain and have up-to-date risk assessments. A well-protected, secure yard to store your plant is also a must.

Even after taking precautions, your plant could still be stolen. If it is stolen and you must file a claim, it can be a huge hassle.

## Appendix 4: Available Systems, Devices, and Asset Storage

This section provides practical guidance on how to secure different types of equipment. Each category includes specific recommendations tailored to the nature, use, and vulnerability of the equipment. By following these measures, you can significantly reduce the risk of theft or vandalism and ensure that your assets remain protected in a variety of environments.



*Perimeter intrusion detection system – monitors site boundaries and alerts to unauthorised access.*





## 4.1 Earth-Moving

### Excavators

Turn the cabin at an angle against the undercarriage. Extend the excavator arm completely and place the bucket on the ground. If the machine has wheels, make sure these are turned left or right. Lift the excavator using the push bar. Place individual buckets between the fixed excavator bucket and the ground. Place the excavator directly in front of a container and place the bucket on top of the container. This will prevent the container from being opened or lifted.

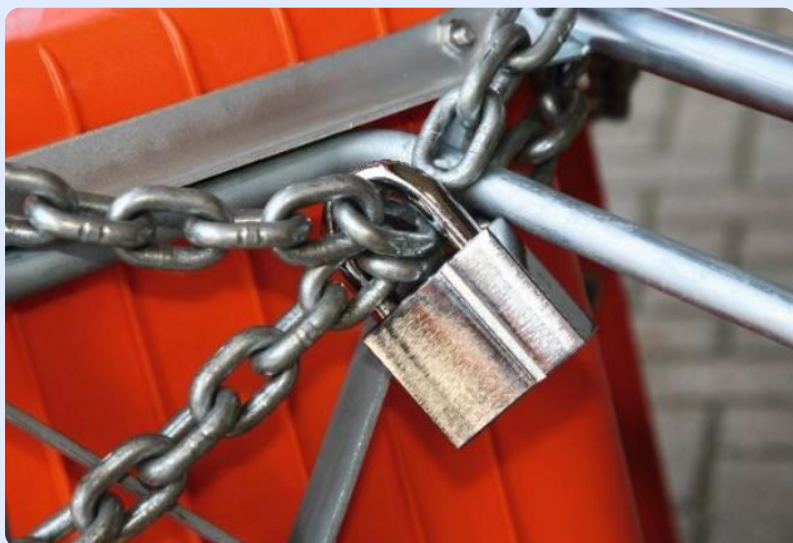
### Skid loaders

Place buckets or forks on the ground and use these to lift the loader off the ground. Place any individual buckets or forks between the fixed excavator bucket and the ground.

### Dumpers

Turn the dumper wheels all the way right or left, in case of an articulated dumper, bend the machine all the way right or left. Place the dumper between the excavator bucket and the undercarriage of an excavator. Rest the excavator bucket inside the dumper.





## 4.2 Scaffolds, Ladders, and Stairs

### Ladders and Staircases

Stow away the ladders and stairs in a container or place them out of sight. Bundle several ladders and stairs together with chains and/or attach them to stationary objects.

### Scaffolds

Never leave dismantled scaffolding unattended. Assemble the scaffold immediately upon delivery, and collect it promptly after dismantling or return it yourself. If neither is possible, secure the scaffolding with chains.



## 4.3 Telehandlers, Hoists, and Lifting

### Telehandlers

Support the telehandler with props as much as possible. Telescope the boom and turn the wheels completely to the left or right.

### Hoists and lifting

Support the ladder lift with props as much as possible. Leave the lift folded out, weather permitting. Leave tilt lifts turned upwards, weather permitting.





## 4.4 Aerial Work Platforms

### (Articulated) telescopic boom lifts

Support the aerial work platform with props as much as possible. If possible, unfold the platform. If the boom is elevated, make sure that no vehicles or objects can be placed under the boom or bucket. Place the turntable at an angle against the undercarriage.

### Scissor lifts

Take out the removable control panel from the scissor lift and store it safely in a designated location. If possible, raise the platform and turn the wheels at an angle. If equipped, deploy outriggers.





## 4.5 Energy and Lighting

### Mobile lighting towers

Support the mobile lighting tower with props as much as possible. If possible, leave the lighting tower folded out, lock it, or use wheel clamps.

### Compressors

For compressors, disconnect and store the air tools in a container. If it is a trailer model, use a coupling lock and/or wheel clamp. If possible, place generators and compressors in an enclosed building.

### Generators

Never leave generators unattended on a trailer. Use chains to secure the generator to a stationary object or with other equipment. This can be done through the lifting eyes. Place forks or an excavator bucket over the generator or on top of it if necessary. Place a mat or tarpaulin between them for protection.





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