



# Is Fuel Theft Hitting Your Bottom Line?

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Fuel theft can take many forms, from organised criminal gangs stealing thousands of litres in one hit to the opportunist thefts, or the less visible forms of theft from within your own business.

So how do you minimise the risk of fuel theft? There are a number of measures that you can put in place, ranging from reviewing your fuel security measures to putting in place efficient fuel monitoring practices. Below are a number of measures that can help reduce your risk.

**Fit Locking Fuel Caps.** This basic solution is the first line of defence, anything that slows down a potential theft is likely to reduce the risk.

**Fit Anti-Siphon Devices.** There are a number of products on the market that can be inserted in the neck of the fuel tank to eliminate fuel being siphoned out. This will not stop a determined thief who drills a hole in your tank, but it will certainly slow them down.

**Educate your Drivers.** If you have not already done so, then instigate a process of daily pre trip inspections for your drivers. This should include a check of the fuel gauge reading against that recorded when the vehicle was parked up. Not foolproof, but this will certainly raise a red flag if there is a huge discrepancy, it will allow you to follow up sooner rather than later. For years we have been telling our drivers to top their fuel tanks up at the end of the day to avoid condensation in the fuel tank. This is good practice, but if the vehicle is going to be parked up away from a secure yard for the night, it may well be better leaving the fuel top up till the next morning. If the fuel tank is close to empty, then there is not much opportunity for fuel theft. Educate your drivers of the consequences of fuel theft.

**Park your vehicles in a secure yard.** The best place to park a truck at night is in a secure yard, with security fencing and gates, good lighting, security cameras and, better still, with swipe card access that records the details of all entries and exits. This makes it harder for the opportunist thieves.

**Increase Fuel Card Security Measures.** Start by setting the fuel cards up so that they are assigned to a particular vehicle. Restrict purchases to fuel only (and only for the type of fuel used by that particular vehicle). Set the fuel card up with a daily purchase limit, and a limit to the number of transactions per day. Set up cards to only allow purchases at particular sites, if the vehicle normally runs between Christchurch and Dunedin, but suddenly tries to make a purchase in Rotorua, then chances are the card has been stolen. Cards should only operate by PIN number, and this should not be left with the vehicle, or worse still written on the card, or the card holder. Set cards up

to require a fleet/registration number and mileage recording to allow the transaction to be completed. Instruct your drivers to correctly enter information. Don't leave fuel cards in vehicles, assign them to drivers at the start of each trip or work day.

**GPS based Telematics Systems.** GPS when paired with a telematics system that controls Road User Charges purchases, monitors fuel consumption, engine management and driver behaviour is very powerful tool if set up correctly and you have taken the time to understand the reporting abilities of the system. Many GPS systems give you the ability to link fuel purchases with actual vehicle location (at the time of fuel purchase) thereby assisting in identifying fuel theft. GPS reports make it easy for trucking operators to compare actual fuel usage against expected use. If the vehicle normally returns 1.85km/l on a particular delivery run, but has recently only been achieving 1.65km/l, then you are in a good position to investigate further.

**Implement Fuel monitoring systems.** Recording accurate data is the key to any successful system. If your vehicles are fitted with GPS systems, then you are half way there. If you are still running manual recording systems, then all is not lost. You need to cover the basics. On your drivers' daily log sheets, have your drivers record their daily start and finish distance readings, along with details of all fuel purchases. These should include copies of all fuel purchase receipts. If they are running auxiliary power units for refrigeration etc., then have your drivers make these as separate purchases, with separate receipts. From this data you should be able to work out normal fuel consumption and purchase patterns. Look out for smaller than usual fuel purchases or multiple purchases on the same day.

You can compare fuel use between similar vehicles doing similar work, and look for, and monitor for any discrepancies. If you find any, investigate further. It may be down to a maintenance issue, but it may also be down to some form of fuel shrinkage, either way, you need to have the information to follow through.

**Do thorough background checks on new employees.** This may seem like a basic procedure for a trucking operator, but you would be surprised at the number of trucking operators that don't get thorough background checks completed on new employees. A couple of phone calls which red flag any historical issues can save you grief further down the track.

NZ Trucking Association would be pleased to hear from you, and can be contacted by phone on 0800 338 338 or via email [info@nztruckingassn.co.nz](mailto:info@nztruckingassn.co.nz)



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