

## NINE TIPS FOR PREVENTING TROOP TRAILER THEFT



Imagine this: Your troop is ready to depart for a big campout. All the Scouts and adult volunteers have arrived at the church on time, and the weather is perfect.

But something's missing: your troop trailer. Oh, and hundreds or even thousands of dollars in gear inside.

That's why you should take steps now to safeguard your unit's trailer and its contents.

Acts of theft don't get much lower than stealing from a Cub Scout pack, Boy Scout troop, Varsity team, or Venturing crew. But it happens all the time.

Here are some ways to ward off potential thieves:

Purchase a wheel lock. Phillip Moore, insurance and risk management specialist at the national BSA headquarters, recommends checking with a boat dealership to buy a device like the ones police officers use on illegally parked cars. "The wheel lock is a visible deterrent and does not allow the trailer to be moved," Moore says.

Block the doors. Moore also suggests parking your trailer so that its rear doors butt up against a wall or some other permanent structure. Combining that with a wheel lock will make it much tougher for a thief, he says.

Don't store any gear inside. It may not be practical for all troops, but Jason P.'s unit keeps all of its gear at a separate location. If thieves discover the trailer is empty, they may leave it alone.

Paint the top of your trailer with large identifying information. This way, "if it is stolen it can be identified from the air, where most of those who would steal it would not think to look," says Kenneth K.

Think before you park. Rather than parking the trailer in a church lot that's empty most nights, many Scouters said their trailer lives at the home of an adult leader. It's "just like real estate," says Eric C. "Location, location, location."

Make friends in high places. If you don't want to or can't park at a Scouter's home or at your meeting site, ask your local police department if they'll let you store your trailer there. That's what Mike L. did. "As far as I know, that's a pretty good spot," he says. "I think everyone should consider it!"

Get insured. "Nothing is 100 percent safe," Ken K. reminds us. So insure your trailer and its contents from theft or damage. It might be money well spent.

Go incognito. A cool design for your trailer can be an important recruiting tool and instill a sense of pride for your troop. But Cindy P. says those markings also might make it a target. "Our trailer has no troop identifying markings on the outside," she says.

Lock it down. You can never have too many locks, suggests Ron S. "When we built our troop shed and pad behind our charter organization, a heavy chain was cemented into the foundation. So, besides being locked to the pad, the trailer doors are secured with heavy duty discus locks and the hitch with a coupler lock."

Of course, there's one more way to make sure your trailer isn't stolen. "We don't use a trailer," says Aaron D. "Issue resolved."