

Securing the Troop Trailer

By Matthew Rusten

A troop trailer is an essential part of the unit. It represents the troop's identity while also transporting thousands of dollars of camping equipment to and from campsites. The thought of that trailer being stolen - unimaginable.

Unfortunately, Scouts BSA troop trailer theft is on the rise. Luckily, there are many ways to protect your unit's trailer from disaster.

Investing in Security

There are products for sale, such as:

- Wheel clamps/chock locks/boots to stop wheel movement
- Coupler locks, hitch locks, and tongue locks to stop unauthorized towing
- Padlocks for trailer doors to stop unwanted snooping
- Discus-shaped padlocks or locks with a shrouded shackle, which are stronger than padlocks with a U-shaped shackle
- Interior alarms to scare off a trailer burglar or to alert a unit leader
- Security cameras on trailer exterior or on a nearby building
- GPS tracker to always know where the trailer is
- Insurance for both the trailer and gear inside

These investments in security can physically prevent a theft, can be a visual deterrent for a theft, or help police recover a trailer in the unfortunate case of a theft. Creating redundancy in locks is also a good practice to further protect a trailer.

Making it identifiable

A leading reason troop trailers are stolen is not for the gear inside, but the trailer itself. Making your unit's trailer distinct can ward off trailer bandits and help recovery in the case of a theft. Great ways to make a trailer unique include:

- Paint it a bold color - on the whole trailer, or on specific parts like the bumper, hitch, or interior
- Apply decals - troop numbers, hometown lettering, troop insignia, reflective panels. Decals look great and can be difficult to completely remove
- Etch or weld troop information into the metal frame of the trailer
- Unique state-specific license plates add another identifiable element

- Paint the troop number on the roof - easy to miss from the ground, but very visible from the air

Branding a trailer can be a great source of identity for a troop and a passive form of recruitment. Making your troop's trailer unique deters theft by making resale much more difficult. Creating multiple forms of identification on a trailer ensures trailers can be found and returned, or never stolen in the first place.

Low Cost Protection

Other practices can help prevent theft while not costing a dime.

- Park trailers with the large doors against a wall so that they can't be opened without moving the whole trailer
- Leave as little gear inside a trailer as possible
- Remove a wheel or tow hitch to make it much harder to drive away.
- Avoid parking a trailer in an empty parking lot. Instead, park it at a leader's house or a location that is highly visible and monitored.
- Keep the trailer safe at the campsite. Always lock all doors when it will be left alone and consider removing the tow hitch
- Make sure the trailer is safe in transit. Keep the trailer in eyesight at rest stops and gas stations

The last thing a troop should be worrying about is a stolen trailer. Taking a moment to assess if your current unit practices protect against or invite crime allows the unit to focus on Scouts having a great time outside excelling at survival skills, leadership, and character-building activities.

Interested in more tips to secure your troop trailer? Check out these articles below, or reach out to your local police station for the most up-to-date guidance.

Aaron on Scouting

<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2018/10/17/tips-for-preventing-troop-trailer-theft/>

<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2021/04/28/scout-leaders-whose-troop-trailers-were-stolen-share-what-theyd-do-differently/>

Safety Moment

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/trailer-theft/>