



# Today's Best Practices to Protect Against Job Site Theft

Stay up-to-date on theft trends and learn how to prevent theft on construction sites.



In construction, time and money are at a premium. Losing out on one or the other can derail an entire project and lead to bigger losses down the line.

Threats to time and money in construction can come from anywhere, but thefts top the chart, accounting for the most overall losses in construction compared with other risks, like vandalism, fire damage, and collision. It's so common that experts attribute a staggering \$1 billion in construction industry losses to theft each year.

While construction theft isn't new, the risk it poses has exploded in recent years. Because of the building boom and inflated building prices, today's contractors are taking the brunt of that risk.

In Denver, CO, the industry saw a 36% increase in construction site thefts in the first half of 2022 compared to 2021. It's not just a big city thing, though. Contractors all over have reported an [increase in thefts in 2022](#).

This increased risk means staying up-to-date on construction crime trends and updating theft protection measures is more important than ever.

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## COMMON CONSTRUCTION SITE THEFT TARGETS

Construction sites double as a storage site for valuable tools and materials, but often the security of outdoor sites isn't enough to prevent thieves from helping themselves.

Although job sites are home to thousands of tools and materials, criminals target some items more often than others.

**Below are the top three most frequently stolen items from construction sites.**

### 01 Tools

Thieves steal tools from construction sites more often than other equipment, with some studies finding that close to 40% of stolen goods are tools.

Included in this are hand tools, power tools, and any other handheld tool that's used during construction.

Because tools are easy to remove, hide, and resell, they make an easy target for thieves.

Permanent markings on tools can help deter thefts of opportunity and aid in recovery efforts. No one wants to buy or possess a tool that was obviously stolen, so they're less likely to be targeted. Besides marking, keeping tools locked up and accounted for at the end of every shift can be an excellent theft deterrent.



### 02 Heavy Construction Equipment

While it's hard to believe someone could steal a backhoe or a bulldozer without being seen, people steal heavy equipment [9 times more](#) often than they vandalize it.

Since heavy construction equipment boasts such a high price tag, thieves are highly motivated to steal these items when they get the chance.

To help prevent heavy equipment theft, keep the equipment locked when not in use and park vehicles strategically to make theft more difficult. When possible, keep the equipment out of sight and in a monitored location.



### 03 Building Materials

Building materials like lumber, copper, brass mill shapes, and steel account for 11.3% of construction site theft incidents. These materials go in and out of style for thieves, depending on market demand and cost. Increasing materials prices drive these types of thefts, with more expensive materials seeing higher theft rates. With lumber up [60% since 2021](#), it's been a big target for thieves looking to resell as well as opportunist thieves sourcing material for their own personal projects.

Stay informed on construction site theft trends and keep higher value materials out of sight and secure so they're harder for thieves to access.



## WHEN DOES CONSTRUCTION SITE THEFT OCCUR?

Most construction site thefts occur during peak construction periods, with the most theft reports occurring between May and September. However, any time construction tools or materials are left unattended, they are at risk.

Daytime thefts are most often perpetrated by employees, but overnight thefts are the most common, as thieves prefer a dark and empty construction site to reduce their chance of getting caught.



## MORE THAN JUST STOLEN CONSTRUCTION GOODS

A single theft incident cost an average of \$5,865 in 2019. Since then, building materials prices have increased by [over 35%](#), which means there's even more on the line for contractors who become victims of construction site theft.

Police recover less than 25% of stolen construction goods, with some sources claiming recovery in less than 7% of cases. In most cases, the tools, equipment and materials are just gone, which causes a domino effect of losses, like:

- Project delays because of missing tools or materials
- Additional costs associated with project delays (employee wages, liquidated damages, rental extensions)
- Cost of missing materials, tools, or equipment
- Cost and schedule impact of replacing items
- Client dissatisfaction
- Higher insurance premiums

When it comes to recouping losses, insurance companies often take weeks or months to pay out the cost of stolen goods. The time involved in replacing said goods may contribute to additional project delays, the cost of which may be as high as \$27,750 per day in liquidated damages and overhead, according to a study by [Navigant Consulting](#).

No matter how you cut the pie, it's clear that theft prevention is essential to every construction site.



## HOW TO PROTECT AGAINST JOB SITE THEFT

The relatively low rate of item recovery coupled with the high rate of construction theft means construction site security is no longer optional. Every contractor should know what they're up against and what security options are available for their unique project.

While some thefts are premeditated or the result of organized crime, others are thefts of opportunity. Opportunity-driven thefts happen when tools or materials are easily accessible and unsupervised. Perpetrators may include employees who skim small amounts of materials for personal projects, teenagers looking for a midnight joy ride, or thieves who spot valuable goods and find an easy way onto the job site.

Premeditated thefts can hit harder, with large trailers-worth of tools, building materials, and heavy equipment gone in just a few hours.

Insurance can help once a theft has already occurred, but taking measures to protect against job site theft is a critical step in ensuring a construction project stays on time and on budget.

### Here are 8 of today's theft protection best practices:

**01** **Permanently mark tools**  
Most people don't want to buy stolen merchandise, so thieves are less likely to take indelibly marked items for resale. Similarly, employees are less likely to steal items that are marked and accounted for at the end of every shift.

**02** **Strategically park construction equipment**  
Parking construction vehicles in such a way that other vehicles or structures are blocking them from being towed or driven off can deter thieves looking for a quick getaway.

**03** **Install temporary fencing**  
Fencing can be a great deterrent for thieves because it prevents them from seeing what's on the menu, and it makes entering and exiting the site more difficult.



**04** **Install motion-triggered lighting**  
Most thieves don't want a spotlight on their criminal activities, and they certainly don't want an audience, so motion-triggered lighting can scare them away.

**05** **Display surveillance and prosecution warning signs throughout the site**  
Prominently placed signs that let thieves know they're being watched and that prosecution is in their future may make them think twice, especially when combined with visible security cameras and motion lighting.

**06** **Deploy construction security cameras**  
Construction security cameras can provide full site coverage at a lower cost than monitored surveillance options. Some security camera systems offer real-time alerts to assist with quick police response.



**07** **Deploy monitored surveillance cameras**  
Monitored surveillance camera systems can be more expensive because someone must watch the video feed at all times. The payoff can be fast response time in the case of a theft.

**08** **Hire security guards to patrol the site overnight**  
Security guards are the most expensive option on the list, but nothing deters thieves like a guard. This option makes sense on large, high-budget projects in high-density areas that see a lot of theft.

The cost of the above prevention measures can range from pocket change to prohibitively expensive, depending on the size of the construction project. Security guards or monitored surveillance cameras can eat up a large portion of the bottom line, while construction security cameras, motion-triggered lighting, and signs may have a smaller budgetary impact.

Most contractors are looking for the most effective security measures with the best price point for their project. In many cases, security camera systems are the answer. Construction site cameras have become popular in recent years, and while the cameras on the market today vary in their functions, they each have their own benefits.

**Below is a summary of the frontrunners:**

### **CCTV Security Cameras**

CCTV cameras are the classic security camera system that offers secure, basic camera coverage. These usually require wired AC power and ethernet cables, with some WiFi options out in the market today. These options require professional installation and are an option when the construction site already has power and working internet.



### **Surveillance Cameras / Monitored Systems**

The strength of a true monitored surveillance camera system is that there's always someone watching... literally. These systems are most useful when there's someone monitoring the screen around the clock. They require professional installation and use AC power and ethernet cables in most cases.

### **Solar, Wireless, LTE Site Security Cameras**

Solar powered 4G LTE security cameras are ideal for job sites at every stage. Small to medium-sized projects without power or internet on site are logical candidates for a solar security camera system. These construction site security cameras offer options like motion-triggering, infrared lighting, and smart features like 24/7 alerts. These options are often less expensive because they don't require professional installation or monitored surveillance.



Every security camera solution has its advantages, but they're not all the best choice for every project. The project's needs and budget should help drive the decision on which type of camera is best.

Paired with some of the other measures on the best practices list, security cameras are one of the best ways to protect against job site theft.

When time and money are at a premium, construction theft prevention measures can make the difference. From deploying solar powered security cameras to making slight changes in daily security habits, there's a solution for every project.

Today's construction industry requires contractors to stay up-to-date on theft trends and current best practices. Thieves won't wait until it's convenient, which means now is always the best time to improve job site theft protection measures.



## ABOUT SENSERA SYSTEMS

Simply put, Sensera Systems provides the most flexible, reliable, and affordable camera solutions in the industry.

Our professional solutions are purpose-built for the rigors of active jobsites, both large and small. Deployed on thousands of projects across North America, our solar/wireless solutions help protect stakeholders stay informed and remotely manage their LEM, logistics, risk, and safety from any location, in real time. Securely managed from a single platform, our solutions provide the most reliable and cost-effective real-time visual monitoring and documentation in the industry, all in a hassle-free package that is easy to setup and use within minutes.

For more information, visit [www.senserasystems.com](http://www.senserasystems.com)



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