



THE SURVEY  
ASSOCIATION

ISSUE 3  
OCTOBER 2018  
©TSA

# MEMBER'S BRIEFING NOTE

## THEFT MITIGATION MEASURES



### Introduction

Theft of equipment is a serious issue for the whole survey industry. Opportunistic criminal activity routinely brings work schedules to a halt, raises concerns about personal safety and security, and incurs additional costs in replacement and insurance premiums for survey companies.

Figures from March 2017 to January 2018, indicate survey equipment with an estimated value of £2.4 million was stolen across the UK from TSA Members alone.

TSA has an official agreement with SmartWater for the reporting of all survey equipment theft. This can be done directly through TSA's website. Follow the link for full details [www.tsa-uk.org.uk/equipment-theft](http://www.tsa-uk.org.uk/equipment-theft)

### To deter opportunistic theft of a survey instrument we advise the user to:

- 1 Secure the tripod to a solid immovable object, like a metal fence, lamp post, telephone pole, tree, or even some parts of a vehicle such as the tow hook or wheels.
- 2 There are several locking devices on the market to secure a Total Station or laser scanner to the tripod, including the 'Wren-a-Guard' and Bradlock systems. We advise using police-approved, heavy chains and padlocks, resistant to bolt croppers. These will generally allow connection to an immovable object within a reasonable range.
- 3 The use of a tripod 'spider', available with some security systems for use on slippery surfaces, has rubber bands that can be pulled up and over the tripod legs, thus rendering the equipment awkward for an opportunistic thief to carry away at speed.
- 4 If your security system does not include a tribrach lock cover, fasten the small screw on the tribrach release to prevent the instrument from being detached, and therefore vulnerable to theft.
- 5 A determined thief may still get around these measures with bolt croppers, so the quality and size of the steel chains should be a consideration. Some practised thieves may even know how to detach the instrument from the tribrach with a small screwdriver.

- 6 If your instruments have a PIN number facility this should be activated. We also advise registering your instruments with the manufacturer. In the event of a theft, criminals may try to register the instrument themselves, request a service or seek a repair. Unknown users linked to a logged instrument can be located and traced.
- 7 Make sure vehicles carrying equipment to and from site are securely locked and alarmed and consider fitting deadlocks. Extra vigilance is needed when surveyors return from site to office as thieves may take any opportunity to break into an unattended vehicle if they believe it contains expensive survey instruments.
- 8 Further deterrents to thieves include, the DataTag system and SmartWater. DataTag use visible, non-removeable stickers, and also log the information the police require on ownership, should the equipment be recovered at a later date. SmartWater is a traceable liquid and forensic asset marking system. It is applied to items of value, with visible branding offering a further deterrent to thieves.

**In the event your instrument is stolen, the key considerations should be:**

- 1 Personal Safety.
- 2 Obtaining good evidence.
  - If you are directly involved in an incident do not take risks. Offenders can be opportunistic, professional and unstable.
  - Try to stay calm and avoid confrontation.
  - Give the offenders what they want but mentally note as much detail about their appearance as you can – age, height, hair, accent, build, clothing, footwear, jewellery, tattoos and mannerisms.
  - If a vehicle is involved, look at the make, model, colour, registration number and the direction it takes. Does the vehicle have any memorable features such as a roof rack?
  - Notice anything the offenders touch. Avoid touching these items if they are left behind.
  - As soon as is practical, write down the sequence of events and description of the offenders.
  - After a theft has taken place, make a note of the time and date the instrument was taken. Take a few photographs (a mobile phone is usually sufficient for this purpose) of the setting and some surrounding details. Note if there are any CCTV cameras in the vicinity.
  - Make a note of the name of the road and the district/area you are in.
  - Call the office/supplier to obtain full details of the instrument make, model and serial numbers.
  - Without risking your personal safety, approach any possible witnesses such as passersby or residents in the surrounding area and record their observations, if any.
  - Call 999 and explain to the police that a high value survey instrument has been stolen. Make a note of the name and number of the police officer dealing with your case, the police station where it was reported, and the crime number you are given.
  - Write out a full report as soon as possible after the event whilst it is all fresh in your mind and with as much information as possible, along with any photographs you managed to take. Keep a copy of this information, electronically if possible, as it will be required by your insurers.

- Inform your insurers of the incident. They may also ask to see original invoices, receipts or hire agreement documents.
- Inform your instrument suppliers of the theft so they can log the details and serial numbers for worldwide circulation.
- If needed, your suppliers will advise on replacement instruments to keep you working.
- Extra vigilance is needed after a theft, particularly if surveyors go back to the site as criminals may anticipate this situation and return.
- Victims of crime can sometimes suffer a delayed shock reaction, especially if they have been directly involved. Inform work colleagues, staff, friends and family to ensure you receive support if you need it.

## Summary

Review the security measures you have in place to protect equipment from opportunistic theft whilst onsite or when transported in a vehicle. Consider using one of the locking devices on the market to secure tripods and instruments whilst in the field and make sure vehicles are securely locked and alarmed if parked. Professional third-party security systems range from visual deterrents to sophisticated forensic asset marking through traceable liquid.

If a theft occurs, remember the two main considerations are for personal safety and obtaining good evidence. Do not negotiate or confront the thief but notice as much about the offender and the situation as you can. As soon as is practical write down the sequence of events and a description. Take a photograph of the scene on your mobile phone.

Inform your office of the theft and obtain the details about the instruments that the police will need. Call 999 and report the theft and obtain a crime number. Make sure the insurers and the equipment manufacturers are also informed. Victims of crime may need support after an incident and a delayed reaction is not unusual.

## Acknowledgements

David Watterston MCIInsteCES MIoD

Korec and Topcon

Rachael Oakley of SmartWater and Supt Tom Harding of West Mercia Police

Keep up to date with the current advice on security via TSA and consult suppliers for information on the latest security products and systems.

## How to report theft of Survey Equipment to SmartWater

- 1 Follow the link [www.tsa-uk.org.uk/equipment-theft](http://www.tsa-uk.org.uk/equipment-theft)
- 2 Download the incident form.
- 3 Complete the spreadsheet, including as much detail as possible.
- 4 Send, together with any supporting information such as photos or videos to [donotreplyanalysts@smartwater.com](mailto:donotreplyanalysts@smartwater.com)

## TSA Contact Details

### The Survey Association

Northgate Business Centre,  
38 Northgate,  
Newark-on-Trent,  
Nottinghamshire NG24 1EZ

Tel: **01636 642 840**

Email: **office@tsa-uk.org.uk**

Website: **www.tsa-uk.org.uk**

## TSA Disclaimer

Whilst The Survey Association (TSA) makes every attempt to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information contained in this publication, this information should not be relied upon as a substitute for formal advice from the originating bodies or services of TSA members. You should not assume that this publication is error-free or that it will be suitable for the particular purpose which you have in mind when using it. TSA assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions in this publication or other documents which are referenced by or linked to this publication.

In no event shall TSA and its employees and agents be liable for any special, incidental, indirect or consequential damages of any kind, or any damages whatsoever, including, without limitation, those resulting from loss of use, data or profits, whether or not advised of the possibility of damage, and on any liability, arising out of or in connection with the use or performance of this publication or other documents which are referenced by or linked to this publication.

## Document Revision History

Issue 1	November 2014	Original document
Issue 2	May 2015	TSA disclaimer added
Issue 3	October 2018	Revised name and text amends