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Theft Thwarted with Trailer Intelligence Platform

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White Paper presented by Spireon

Tutle & Tutle Trucking has drastically reduced theft and loss with the deployment of a comprehensive, rich data trailer management solution.

Theft poses a major threat to the trucking industry. In fact, the FBI estimates more than $30 billion in losses of cargo and equipment annually in the United States. Businesses face enough challenges with maximizing productivity and profits without having to deal with the unfortunate issue of theft.

Tutle & Tutle Trucking, Inc. is one company that's all too familiar with this issue. Based in Cleburne, Texas, and in business since 1994, Tutle & Tutle manages a fleet of 650 bulk trailers, the majority of which haul sand used for fracking by natural gas producers.

Tutle & Tutle's fleet serves many of the natural gas producers that are extracting gas from the Barnett Shale, a geological formation located in the Bend Arch-Fort Worth Basin in Texas. Experts estimate that the Barnett Shale might have the largest producible reserves of any onshore natural gas field in the country. However, Barnett Shale is known as a "tight" gas reservoir, meaning it can only be extracted efficiently through fracking. That means growing business opportunities for firms such as Tutle & Tutle – but also a spike in criminal activity associated with equipment and cargo theft.

The company was losing two to three trailers each year, with each trailer worth an estimated $60,000. Not to mention, the trailers were often carrying up to $20,000 worth of sand.

Brian Gannon, project manager at Tutle & Tutle explains that as their business has increased, so have the risks associated with theft of trailers, which are often loaded with very expensive sand used in the fracking process. And it's not just the cost of the actual trailer and load that hits hard – it's also the loss of productivity when part of their fleet is missing. "Theft used to be a big problem," Gannon says. "As we were getting busier and busier, losing the use of a single trailer would create a direct, negative impact on our bottom line."

Trailer Theft and Loss is a Costly Problem

Without any sort of tracking solution in place, the recovery of stolen trailers can be nearly impossible. "We've had several trailers stolen," says Gannon. "Once they're gone, they're very difficult to find. And it seemed like we would get hit all at once with trailers getting stolen, stripped down and dumped in a field in the middle of nowhere."

Not tracking these assets was becoming a costly problem for Tutle & Tutle. The company was losing two to three trailers each year, with each trailer worth an estimated $60,000. Not to mention, the trailers were often carrying up to $20,000 worth of sand. Add to that the cost of the many hours spent searching for a stolen trailer, as well as filing the related police reports and other paperwork. With the trucking company often working at full capacity, there was also a significant cost through lost productivity. "We were stretched so thin that if we had one trailer stolen, that might mean one or two of our guys would be out of work for a while until we got a replacement trailer up and running," Gannon says.

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— Brian Gannon,
Tutle & Tutle Trucking
Project Manager

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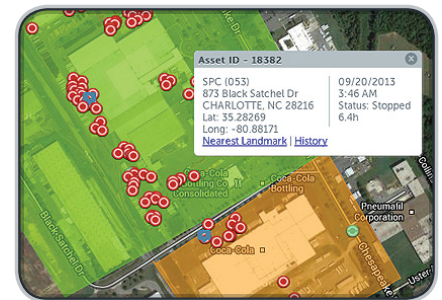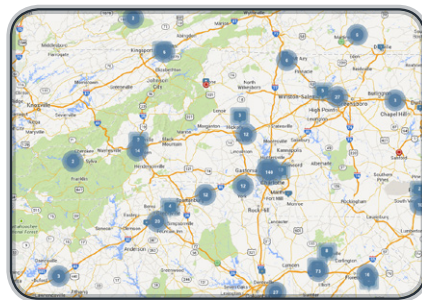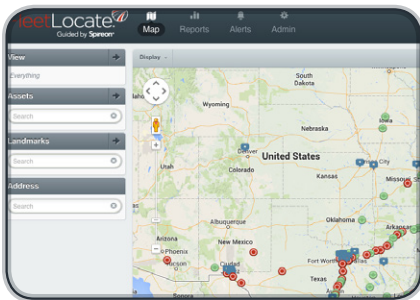
Seeking a Trailer Management Solution

Looking to both tighten security and find a long-term answer to more effectively monitor and manage its trailer fleet, Tutle & Tutle went in search of a solution that would provide real-time information on the location and status of its fleet. After reviewing a variety of options on the market, Tutle & Tutle selected Spireon's FleetLocate rich data trailer management platform.

Spireon's next-generation GPS technology and M2M-based NSpire Intelligence Platform provided rich data the company could use for state-of-the-art tracking and analytics. "The Spireon platform was a good fit to effectively secure, track, and provide real-time visibility into the movements of our large and far-flung fleet of trailers, which can range from North Dakota to Texas and all parts in between," Gannon says.

Yet there was a challenge before the system could be fully implemented. Because of the rough, rocky, and remote terrain where the trailers operate, Tutle & Tutle wanted to make sure the devices could be attached to the trailer securely enough so that they would not be jostled or become dislodged in the process of hauling sand to wells, many of which are located far off established roads. Working with Spireon's installation services, they quickly devised a solution to fit their specific needs.

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Cloud-Based Trailer Management Platform Pays Off

With FleetLocate deployed on its fleet, Tutle & Tutle's GPS tracking devices send packets of information using cellular technology, including the position of the GPS device. This information then enables the GPS receivers to record the location of the device. Raw data is transmitted to Spireon's NSpire platform every ten minutes, and as soon as the NSpire platform receives data from the trailers, it processes the data and assembles a usable picture of the trailer activity.

"Since we installed FleetLocate, we have seen a dramatic improvement in theft deterrence and recovery," Gannon says. "We lost just one trailer – and that was for less than an hour. The driver had just dropped it off and didn't tell anyone. Fortunately, the trailer was equipped with the trailer tracker so we located it within 20 minutes. Boom. Just 20 minutes and we were up and running. That saved us an unbelievable amount of time, money and hassle trying to find it."

Gannon also mentions that the FleetLocate platform has a powerful reputation that has would-be thieves or disgruntled drivers thinking twice before touching a Tutle & Tutle trailer. Our trailers are clearly marked with signage that states that they are protected by FleetLocate to deter theft. This signage on the trailers, as well as awareness by the drivers that the trailers are being closely monitored, prevents problems from occurring.

"The word has definitely gotten out," Gannon says. "We don't have every trailer equipped with the FleetLocate solution, but enough trailers have it that it is a real deterrent. We have warning signs up all around our yard as well. People don't touch equipment that they know is being tracked this well."

Tutle & Tutle has also received positive feedback from their insurer, indicating they are pleased that with the extra layer of loss control protection, Gannon says.

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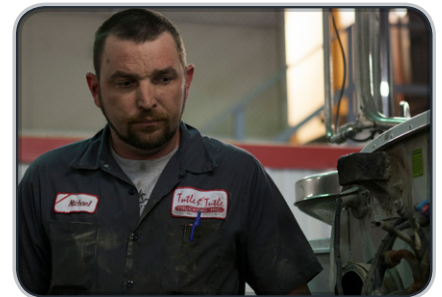Tutle & Tutle Trucking
Project Manager

The Additional Benefits Trailer Management Brings

While the initial aim of implementing FleetLocate was largely focused on theft control, Tutle & Tutle has experienced additional benefits of being able to track trailers in real time and improve utilization. For instance, dispatchers are able to remotely set alerts within the platform to be notified when a trailer has not been used in the last 10 days, which can be a red flag that there is some sort of problem.

"FleetLocate is integrated with McLeod software, so it allows us to really keep track of trailer movements without leaving the McLeod software," Gannon says. "It also helps with maintenance. If our dispatchers notice that a trailer hasn't been running in 15 days, we can pull it into the shop. If a trailer is just sitting, it doesn't make us money, so we want to make sure all trailers are ready to go and being fully utilized."

As Tutle & Tutle's fleet grows, the company intends to expand its deployment of FleetLocate. "We plan to outfit another 50 to 100 trailers with FleetLocate in the coming year," says Gannon.

"It's been a smooth process from the start," Gannon adds. "We received great training and had things up and running quickly, and the platform has worked like a charm ever since. What Spireon has done for us, well, the value really has been tremendous."

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Get Started
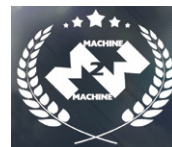Contact the Spireon FleetLocate team at **888-624-1250** or **Spireon-trailers@spireon.com**.

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