Alert Easy★Pro®
Superior Rental Technology

(Alert's responses to this questionnaire from Wayne Walley, Editor of Rental Management Magazine, were excerpted as pull quotes by Rob Ross, President of Alert Management Systems, as part of a lengthy article. It was the Cover Story of the October 2015 Issue of Rental Management: 'Guarding Against Theft'.)

■ **What is your company doing to help your equipment rental company customers prevent equipment theft?** First of all, we support the ARA-sponsored National Equipment Register program by including a (free) NER button on the main menu of every Alert EasyPro system. This allows automatic conversion of your rental equipment file into a standard NER report, so you can conveniently register all your equipment with NER via e-mail, in seconds.

Of course, good rental software can help support 'Best Practices' for theft prevention in all areas of the business.

■ **How can a company's software program help in this area?** Your rental software can help by re-enforcing best practices in all phases of rental transactions, starting with ID and 'bad guy' checking. For example, we encourage the use of our ID Scan integration, which uses OCR (Optical Character Recognition) to check driver's licenses and detect expiration date and address changes as well as multiple potential fraud indicators. Moreover, it maintains a digital color photo of each license, so you have durable forensic evidence to present to the police and to the court. In addition to ID Scan, we also provide built-in web 'look up' buttons so you can check phone numbers, addresses, and customer or business names for validity with one click, at any time during the rental contract writing or look-up process.

Of course, integrated credit card payment processing, along with the switch to EMV, provides additional protection.

We also encourage use of 'Expected Return Date' reporting to prompt follow-up with phone calls within 24 hours to renters whose expected rental term has expired. (*An ARA study once showed that this practice alone can result in an 80% better chance of recovering lost or stolen equipment.) These days, you can even prompt with automated text or e-mail 'Alerts' to contact your customers automatically when the expected rental term has expired.

■ **There are different kinds of theft. How might your software and services help a rental store guard against:**
  - Stolen equipment in the yards
    Mobile Inventory Manager (one of our RER Innovative Product Award-winning Apps) allows you to perform a physical inventory of your equipment in the yard or warehouse at any time. It uses a smart phone or tablet, and allows you to 'cycle count' so that your employees and visitors know you are keeping up constant surveillance of your equipment. Sometimes, we have been told, equipment will 're-appear' in the rental yard as if by magic, when this software is implemented.

- Are there any new technologies or advances in software related equipment theft prevention and recovery? How does telematics figure into this? One of our most important new technologies, called Sign&Rent, solves the vexing problem of 'Blind Drops' at the job site. Nothing is more worrisome than not knowing if your equipment was properly documented as 'received by' the customer. With Sign&Rent, you can collect a signature from the emergency contact person even if they are not on site at the time of the equipment drop-off. You can send a live ("paperless") HTML version of the contract and collect a real-time signature from any smart phone, pad, or PC. The contract can incorporate photos of the equipment, proving the equipment is on-site. Lots of other features, such as circles around pre-existing damage with field notes from the driver, make it possible to keep better track of exceptions that can become opportunities for theft or fraud.   Since the contract includes a date and time stamp for the signature, plus other forensic evidence (even a photo of the signer), it is admissible in court. A PDF copy of the contract is forwarded to the store and the customer automatically via e-mail, so everyone is literally 'on the same page' at all times.

  Another very helpful technology for theft prevention (as well as for collecting meter charges) is GPS Equipment Tracking. Our integration is AEMP-compliant, which means it works with multiple services who support the standard, such as Topcon and ZTR. A popular feature is the ability to setup an electronic boundary around the equipment, so that if it moves beyond the prescribed area, you get an instant Alert and can track it, wherever it goes.

- From your perspective as a software supplier, what do you see as the next steps in theft prevention and recovery for the equipment rental industry? With widespread adoption of products like NER, Sign&Rent and GPS Equipment Tracking, we hope to see a reduction in losses due to theft, as well as an improvement in recovery rates. We also would like to see more incentives provided by insurance companies to encourage the adoption of theft-prevention technologies. As software companies, we will continue to refine our applications and innovate. We will continue to need to produce new ways to help protect our customers from bad guys, who are also getting more sophisticated every year.