

Lockstraps secure valuables in truck bed

Founder devised tie-downs with locking carabiners to deter theft, shifting on the road

Larry Edsall / Special to The Detroit News

Real estate agent Jeff Cranny got tired of stuff being stolen from the back of his pickup truck.

That stuff included gas cans and bicycles, and the thefts weren't limited to the bed of his pickup; a \$1,500 hydrofoil chair was swiped one day from his boat.

When Cranny spent \$7,000 on a dirt bike for the Baja 1000 off-road race, he vowed it would not be stolen. His idea was to enhance the typical tie-down strap with an internal steel cable and with locking carabiners at both ends.

The typical tie-down strap uses an "S" hook, which Cranny knows from experience can come loose as loads shift during transit.

He took his idea to Practical & Creative Innovations, a California-based product development company, for some help. After more than a year of research, development and testing, he has just come to market with Lockstraps, the locking tie-downs.

Based in Temecula, Calif., Lockstraps LLC produces three products: the locking tie-down strap for \$39.95, a soft tie extension for \$7.95, and a 24-foot extension with carabiner for \$40.95.

A Lockstraps with a ratchet tightening system is among six additional products in the development pipeline.

The basic Lockstraps locking tie-down features an eight-bound steel cable sandwiched between 8 1/2 feet of inch-and-a-half-wide double nylon webbing. Rivets secure carabiner locks at both ends of the strap. The carabiners have three-digit locks, and it's easy to set the code.

Cranny, who now works full-time on Lockstraps, says police have told him 90 percent of pickup thefts fall into the "see it, grab it and run" category. He believes 90 percent of such thefts can be prevented by using his products, which require serious tools to violate.

I just did a 2,000-mile test drive using Lockstraps tie-downs to secure a bed full of stuff in my pickup. Everything was safe and sound and unshifted when I arrived, though there was one hiccup: When my son-in-law saw the straps, he seized them to use on the trailer that hauls his lawn mower and his off-road Jeep.

The soft-tie extension allows a Lockstraps tie-down to be secured to something like a motorcycle without the carabiner coming into contact with scratchable metal surfaces.

The "working load limit" for a Lockstraps tie-down is 400 pounds, though the rivets have been tested to 1,200 pounds.

Each Lockstraps tie-down weighs 2 pounds and carries a one-year parts and labor warranty. They are available at retailers or from www.lockstraps.com.



Lockstraps are locking tie-down straps with locking carabiners to keep your stuff, such as this lawn mower, secure whether in the bed of a pickup truck or on an open trailer. (Larry Edsall / Special to The Detroit News)

