

## Little truck good luck

By Karen Mangnall

MEET Dyna, the little truck that saved the day.

The ageing flatbed is the toast of Hi-Lift Cranes in Wiri after leading police to two brazen burglars and \$30,000 of stolen gear.

"Those guys would be astounded if they found out how the cops found them," general manager Barrie Mabbott says.

"It was brilliant."

One recent Monday just before 6am, Mr Mabbott got a call from one of his early drivers to say there had been a break-in at their yard in Kellow Place.

"What first alerted him was a crane left running with its headlights on."

The burglars had broken into the industrial unit behind about 1.30am and then cut through Hi-Lift's security fence, says Manurewa police sergeant Benton Ostler.

"They'd brought oxy-acetelene welding gear and cut through six quite big, bulky padlocks on shipping containers where they store all their equipment."

The pair pillaged \$30,000 of rigging gear, power tools, ladders, 600kg of crane chains, a generator and a waterblaster.

After cutting open the front gate, they drove off with the loot loaded on Dyna's flatbed.

"But unbeknown to them," Mr Ostler says, "the little truck has a GPS system on it."

When the Hi-Lift dispatcher arrived at 7am she fired up the GPS laptop, took one look and got straight on the phone to the boss.

"She said: 'You're not going to believe this - it's just down the road, it's a stone's throw away,'" Mr Mabbott says.

Another truck with the same GPS was sent to find Dyna and their signals overlapped outside a locked unit barely 300 metres away on Earl Richardson Ave.

Mr Mabbott says when they'd first rung the police to report the break-in "they



**Dyna-mic crimefighter:** Hi-Lift Cranes general manager Barrie Mabbott with the little Dyna truck which led police to two burglars and \$30,000 of stolen gear.

Photo: JASON OXENHAM

weren't that interested" because the burglars had gone.

"But as soon as I rang with the new information they were around like a shot."

The police got a search warrant and broke into the unit.

"And there it was," Mr Mabbott says.

"Nothing was missing, everything they'd taken was loaded neatly on the truck."

Police rang the tenant who'd only rented the unit a few days earlier.

"He asked if his V8 Holden Commodore was still parked outside and we said no," Mr Ostler says.

The man then claimed the burglars must have stolen

his car and used the keys to the lockup to hide the truck and stolen gear inside without his knowledge.

"And so now he wants to report his car stolen."

That story was "rubbish", Mr Ostler says, a belief soon borne out when Dyna and the stolen gear were returned to Hi-Lift.

"They pointed to the gas welding gear and said: 'That's not ours.'"

It was while removing the welding gear that police spotted the Hirepool sticker.

"We went to see them and they showed us the documents and security footage."

Those showed that Mr V8

and a mate had hired the oxy-acetelene gear, Mr Ostler says.

"We also got him on security footage driving the car up north on the tollway."

After several days of searching the police tracked down his mate, a qualified welder.

"We found the car at the associate's house and he denied the car was parked there even though you couldn't miss it."

Mr Ostler says those denials and Mr V8's attempts to "lead us on a merry chase" over his stolen car were all for naught.

"We had both of them locked up by Friday."

An unemployed 37-year-

old Pakuranga man and his associate, an unemployed 42-year-old from St Johns, are due to reappear in the Manukau District Court on August 26 charged with burglary.

The Pakuranga man is also charged with making a false statement that his car had been stolen.

"Obviously it was good to get them because of the sheer value of the gear that they stole," Mr Ostler says.

He also enjoys the fact that it was a "1990, crappy old Toyota Dyna truck" with GPS hidden under the front seat that proved the burglars' downfall.

"The last thing you would have thought is it

would have a GPS in it."

At Hi-Lift they're counting themselves "very lucky" to have got back Dyna and all the stolen gear.

Even being "set up like Fort Knox" with razor wire and huge security lamps hadn't deterred the burglars, Mr Mabbott says.

"It was the GPS that saved the day," he says.

The \$2000 to install GPS in each truck and \$700 in monthly costs has been repaid in one hit, he says.

They company put in GPS to be able to claim back the off-road portion of its road user charges.

"We never dreamt we'd need to use it for detective work."