

Security Surge Helps Combat Metal Thieves in the U.K.

Western Power Distribution

Gloucestershire is bucking the trend for soaring metal theft incidents from electricity infrastructure.

It follows electricity distribution company Western Power Distribution (WPD), which manages the power network across the county, stepping up its efforts to combat metal thieves.

Some incidents of metal theft in the region have been extreme – like in 2010 when thieves cut live overhead wires and left them dangling across playing fields at Frampton on Severn.

Having put a range of security measures in place the company's efforts are beginning to pay off. This year, there have been 15 incidents so far, compared with 40 in 2011.

But there can be no room for complacency, as WPD Security manager, Peter Lowe explained, "Safety is our number one priority, which is why we have put a raft of measures in place to deter metal theft, but we have to remain vigilant.

"Perpetrators are prepared to dice with death because of the extremely high voltages involved with our equipment, and for very small reward. They're also putting at risk the lives of our engineers who have to repair and replace infrastructure that may have been left in an unsafe condition, and the lives of innocent members of the public who could become victims," he said.

To deter thieves, WPD has stepped up security with CCTV, anti-vandalism paint, electric fences, patrols, intruder alarms and by applying the forensically traceable solution Smartwater to its equipment.

It has also forged close links with police and scrap metal dealers, publishing a booklet and poster to help them easily identify WPD cables.

Western Power Distribution (WPD) is the distribution network operator for the Midlands, South West England and South Wales, and is responsible for delivering electricity to approximately 7.7 million customers in the UK. WPD is not an electricity supply company and does not bill customers in the UK. Its responsibility is to distribute electricity from the point of generation to homes and businesses.

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