

Collaborative Efforts Help Combat Metal Thieves

Western Power Distribution



Peter Lowe, Security Risk Manager from WPD, shows Sergeant Mark Talbot from Nottinghamshire Police a sample of cable that is commonly stolen and hands out WPD's Cable Identification Poster.

Nottinghamshire 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.

Having put a range of security measures in place, the company's efforts are beginning to pay off. This year, there have been 58 incidents so far, compared to 157 in total 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-vandal 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.

As an active partner, WPD sits on all four regional Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) metal theft groups and helps with anti-metal theft operations and educational visits to scrap metal dealers.

WPD recently provided their Nottingham depot as a venue for Nottinghamshire Police's Metal Theft Reduction Team to train and develop forty of their officers.

"There is no doubt that our partnership with the Nottinghamshire Police has led to very significant reduction," said Peter.

Chief Inspector Sean Anderson heads up the Force's metal theft team. He said: "Nottinghamshire Police is the regional lead on metal theft and is the only Force in the East Midlands with a dedicated metal theft team.

"By working together with neighbouring forces, government and industry we are taking a comprehensive approach to metal theft and, in turn, trying to stay one step ahead of criminals across the region.

"We patrol hotspot areas and work closely with the owners of vulnerable buildings, such as churches and power stations, to provide crime prevention advice.

"We are also running Operation Tornado, a British Transport Police-led initiative from the Association of Chief Police Officers, which requires all scrap metal dealers in the East Midlands to comply with stringent rules when it comes to buying scrap.

"We also regularly stage ad-hoc roadside operations in Nottinghamshire in a bid to keep thieves and handlers on their toes and send the message out that no time or place is safe to commit crime on our watch."

Anyone with any information about metal theft and handling or to report suspicious activity contact Nottinghamshire Police on 101 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Note for newsdesks:

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.

For further information: Michael Clarke on 01332 827464.

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