

Copper — It's Not to Die For

PPL Electric Utilities issues warning amid rash of wire thefts, substation break-ins

PPL Electric Utilities

A spate of break-ins at its electrical substations by thieves in search of copper wire has prompted a warning from PPL Electric Utilities: Think twice, because it could cost you your life.

Thieves in recent weeks and months have broken into numerous electric facilities around the utility's service territory in central and eastern Pennsylvania to cut and steal copper wiring inside. About two dozen copper wire theft incidents have been reported so far this year, most at substations.

The break-ins are being investigated by police and PPL Corporate Security. Area scrap and salvage yards also are on alert for the potential for stolen PPL Electric Utilities wire to be brought to their businesses.

In addition, PPL Electric Utilities is taking steps to better protect its facilities and deter thefts.

"We're not going to detail the additional security measures we're taking, but would-be thieves should be on notice that we're making a concerted effort to prevent future break-ins and apprehend those responsible for previous thefts," said John Kalafut, senior manager of Corporate Security for PPL Services Corp.

The larger issue, beyond the few dollars a pound gained by selling the scrap copper wire, is the potential loss of life.

"Only properly trained and equipped workers should be inside substations," said Dave Bonenberger, vice president of Distribution Operations for the utility. "Stealing copper wire from electric substations is risky, potentially deadly business because of the energized equipment. Life is priceless and certainly worth more than the value of copper wire."

Repairing damage caused by the break-ins, and replacing the stolen copper wire, can easily cost thousands of dollars. Those costs are ultimately borne by all customers.

"We're asking our customers to be vigilant. If they observe suspicious activity around our facilities, they should call their local police department," Kalafut said.

PPL Electric Utilities, a subsidiary of PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL), provides electric delivery services to about 1.4 million customers in Pennsylvania and consistently ranks among the best companies for customer service in the United States. More information is available at www.pplelectric.com.

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