

Copper Theft

Do your buildings have copper pipes or guttering? Perhaps your roofs house copper lightning conductors? If so, beware, copper theft appears to be on the rise in Australia.

In March 2008 Victoria Police seized more than 30 tonnes of stolen copper worth an estimated \$2.7 million and in May of the same year, 16 power poles were cut down in the Blue Mountains and harvested for copper.

Surging demand for copper in China and India has inflated its trading price and led to an increase in thefts of this industrial metal.

Building roofs, pipes, guttering, electrical wiring, telecommunications cables and lightning conductors are just some of the targets for copper theft and the cost to businesses can range from several hundred to tens of thousands of dollars.

Catholic organisations have not been sheltered from copper theft. Catholic Church Insurances has incurred around \$103,000 in claims for copper theft over the last two years.

Copper theft is costly for both the targets and the general community. In addition to the cost in replacing the copper, thefts often leave unsightly damage to external building fixtures, disrupt electricity supplies and phone services, are a drain on resources and lead to water damage.

Organisations that have copper integrated into their building structures or grounds need to remain vigilant and take a proactive risk management approach if they are to limit thieves' opportunity to steal from them.

Taking a risk management approach

Identify and take note of copper and other precious metals such as brass throughout the buildings, particularly on the external surface of buildings. Copper can be found in many different areas such as pipes, guttering, electrical wiring, telecommunications cable and lightning conductors.

Following the identification of copper and other precious metals, conduct a risk assessment to determine the likelihood of theft to these items.

Scenario	Risk	Risk Ranking
Wheelie bins left unsecured and exposed	Easy access to copper pipes	High risk
Overgrown trees and shrubs	Thieves cannot be seen	Medium risk

Risk controls

The following risk controls provide some general suggestions on how to reduce the risk of metal theft:

- Store ladders and wheelie bins in a locked area after hours to prevent access to roofs.
- Lock boundary gates after hours to prevent access to the property.
- Ask neighbours to report suspicious activity to police.
- Keep trees and shrubs trimmed to improve surveillance into the property.
- Take extra precautions during building works where scaffolding is erected. Ensure that building sites are secured after hours to prevent unauthorised access.
- Consider painting the copper to disguise its presence.
- Include copper and metals in your regular building inspections to identify metal theft.
- Replace stolen metals promptly to prevent damage and/or health and safety risks.
- When replacing stolen or damaged copper, consider replacing with an inexpensive alternative. Consult with a suitably qualified person to determine which material may be appropriate e.g. stainless steel, cast iron, Colorbond etc.
- If the property is heritage listed and copper is required to be reinstated following theft or damage, consider applying a unique traceable paint to the copper with the organisation's Australian Business Number or other identifiable number.

- Consider erecting fences that are at least 1.8 metres high.
- Engage an external security company to conduct patrols after hours.
- Review and improve security lighting around the buildings.
- Consider installing closed circuit television cameras.
- Install security signs on perimeter fences and buildings.
- Where electrical wiring has been stolen, ensure the area is cordoned off and danger signage placed around the area (if accessible) to prevent possible electrocution from contact with exposed wires.

Monitoring and review

Monitor and review risk controls at regular intervals to ascertain effectiveness and amend controls if deemed inadequate.

Further Information/Resources

Crime Stoppers Australia

www.crimestoppers.com.au

Your local police department

Neighbourhood Watch Australasia

www.nhwa.com.au

Catholic Church Insurances Risk Management helpdesk

on 1300 660 827

Standards and Regulations

AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management Principles and Guidelines

HB 266: 2010 Guide to managing risk in not-for-profit organizations

IEC/ISO 31010 International Standard: Risk Management – Risk Assessment Techniques

For further information on preventing copper theft or to obtain a copy of our copper theft checklist, please contact the risk management department on **1300 660 827**.

To discuss your insurance options in relation to property protection, please contact your Account Executive on **1800 011 028**.

**For assistance with risk management please call
the Risk Management Helpdesk on**

1300 660 827
www.ccinsurances.com.au

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