

## **PNM Copper Theft Legislation Update**

March 10, 2014

During the 30-day legislative session that just concluded in Santa Fe, we saw good progress in our efforts to address copper theft, a crime that has hurt many of our customers. Governor Susana Martinez signed a new law that criminalizes metal theft. Additionally, \$200,000 has been appropriated for enforcement of the Recycled Metals Act as part of the state government budget. Customers who contacted their legislators to share their first-hand experience with copper theft on their church, business or service organization made a big difference.

SB 21, Disruption of Communications and Utilities, sponsored by Sen. Steve Neville, makes it a criminal act with penalties to create a public safety hazard or disrupt communications and utility services by theft or intentional damage to customer or utility-owned equipment.

The law, which had support from the metal recycling industry, law enforcement and the business community, makes copper theft a misdemeanor for the first and second offenses, punishable by up to one year in jail and up to a \$1,000 fine, and a fourth degree felony for the third and any subsequent offense, punishable by up to 18 months in jail and up to a \$5,000 fine. The statute is one of the first to recognize copper theft as a safety hazard to innocent people, including children, who could come into contact with energized equipment left exposed by thieves, as well as to our employees who work on energized equipment. The law takes effect on May 21.

In 2012, PNM supported an amendment to the Sale of Recycled Metals Act that created a recycled metals reporting data base, but at the time no money was appropriated for enforcement activities. This year, bills sponsored by Rep. Patti Lundstrom in the House and Sen. Steve Neville in the Senate provided a \$200,000 appropriation to the N.M. Regulation and Licensing Department (NMRLD) that will fund that department's investigation and prosecution of those who deal in stolen metal plus training and support for other law enforcement entities.

At PNM, we will continue to work with law enforcement, legislators, the recycling industry, other utilities - and you - to stop copper theft. As a reminder, through our partnership with Crime Stoppers, a \$500 reward will be paid to anyone whose tip leads to the arrest and conviction of a copper thief. Please share that information with friends, family and co-workers.

To ask a question or provide input, contact Manuel Quintana, PNM account manager, at (505) 241-4716 or [manuel.quintana@pnm.com](mailto:manuel.quintana@pnm.com).