

An Update on the Copper Theft Situation



*A personal commitment
to New Mexico*

As many of you already know all too well, copper theft is not a victimless crime – and it is not a trivial crime. Copper theft is a premeditated act that puts lives at risk on a daily basis and causes millions of dollars in damage, lost revenue and wages to the business community and their employees.

In 2013, there were more than 300 metal thefts in Albuquerque. Many of the victims included PNM business customers. Although the thieves may get less than \$100 per theft for selling stolen copper wire, a copper theft costs a customer thousands of dollars in repairs and lost revenue.

More important, there is the very real danger to your safety posed by copper theft:

- Thieves often leave energized equipment open and exposed. If someone were to come into contact with that equipment before we discover the crime, the results could be tragic.
- Ground wires stolen from power lines away from where a lineman is working or in a substation could mean a man's life.
- And then there are the streets left dark because wiring has been stolen from street lights.

What is PNM Doing?

- We have donated \$20,000 to Crime Stoppers to use as reward money for tips that lead to the arrest and apprehension of copper thieves. We spent almost \$30,000 in November and December for radio advertising to help identify copper thieves.
 - This is a national issue and we are talking to other electricity providers and equipment manufacturers across the nation to identify what steps they are taking that have been effective. PNM is also investigating new locking mechanisms that can be installed in the field.
 - We are investing several million dollars to “harden” substations and researching options that will be effective on transformers.
 - We are replacing utility pole grounds with copper clad steel which has no salvage value. Pole grounds are necessary for a properly grounded distribution system.
 - We are working with stakeholders to determine if there is an appropriate legislative initiative to help deter copper theft.
 - There is no one solution or one organization alone that can stop this crime, and we are working with law enforcement and others to understand how we can best address this issue in our community.
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- **What can you do?**
 - We encourage business customers who are worried about copper theft to contact us first so that we can work with them.
 - It is very important that PNM still has access to electric equipment after any theft deterrent modifications.

- We can share what we have learned about copper theft and steps other customers are taking.
- If you see something that looks suspicious to you, don't hesitate to report that to police.

