

NEWS



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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
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COPPER WIRE THEFT CAN BE A DEADLY CRIME

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – The increased market value of copper continues to attract thieves who attempt to steal copper wire from utilities nationwide at the risk of their own lives. Northern Indiana Public Service Company supports beefed up legislation that calls for stricter punishment for metal thefts in Indiana.

“The number and frequency of copper wire thefts is directly tied to the market value of copper. We see horrifying evidence where thieves break into substations and steal ground wires from energized equipment, resulting in serious injury to themselves and, sometimes even death,” said Jim Miller, Manager of Corporate Security for NIPSCO. “This legislation will provide a much-needed deterrent as a direct result of the increased penalties involved.”

NIPSCO has several examples where thieves have put their lives in grave danger because they are trying to steal from high voltage, energized equipment. “In a couple of cases, we searched the perimeter of our property, fearing the thief was seriously wounded or fatally injured, given the extent of the damage inside our facility after an attempted burglary,” Miller said.

In addition to the danger, metal thieves often cause damage to electric facilities, which can result in extensive power outages, explosions, fires and other service disruptions for customers.

Amendments to the Indiana code now allow for Class C felony charges – up from Class D – to be brought against those stealing metal from utilities and dealers who buy metal that is stolen from utilities, hospitals, healthcare facilities, telecommunications providers and other key facilities. It also adds the requirement for scrap dealers to take a photo of the individuals selling metal and the material they are trying to sell.

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COPPER WIRE THEFT

NIPSCO cautions anyone from entering electric facilities and cutting any wires from electric poles or equipment. Warning signs are prominently displayed on the fencing surrounding electric substations, due to the high voltage used in the substations.

Never enter a substation and do not touch any electrical equipment, power lines, or any items that may be in contact with a power line, as attempting to cut or remove wiring is highly dangerous.

NIPSCO encourages customers to contact local law enforcement and the company in the event of any suspicious activity taking place at the substations or around other facilities.

EDITORS NOTE: PHOTO OF A RECENT COPPER WIRE THEFTS ARE ENCLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE OF THIS RELEASE.

NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the 10 energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With over 712,000 natural gas customers and 457,000 electric customers across the northern third of Indiana, NIPSCO is the largest natural gas distribution company, and the second largest electric distribution company, in the state. NiSource distribution companies serve 3.8 million natural gas and electric customers primarily in seven states. More information about NIPSCO is available at www.nipsco.com.

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The aftermath of an attempt made by metal thieves to steal copper cables from a NIPSCO substation using the top of a wooden shipping crate as a makeshift ladder. An explosion occurred, scorching the insulators and sending metal shrapnel flying in every direction. The attempt resulted in significant financial losses and forced unplanned customer outages to complete necessary repairs.