

Protecting Our Parishes, Missions, and Schools

COPPER THEFT | How to Protect Your Church

The FBI has conducted an assessment of copper theft across the United States and has found that copper theft is becoming a national epidemic.

The FBI reports that, "China, India, and other developing nations are driving the demand for raw materials such as copper and creating a robust international trade. Copper thieves are receiving cash from recyclers who often fill orders for commercial scrap dealers. Recycled copper flows from these dealers to smelters, mills, foundries, ingot makers, powder plants, and other industries to be reused in the United States or for supplying the international raw materials demand. As the global supply of copper continues to tighten, the market for illicit copper will likely increase."

Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services (AJGRMS) has seen this epidemic strike our Catholic facilities in every Diocese. The intent of this bulletin is to warn you of the problem and offer cost-effective solutions you can take to protect your assets.

The Diocesan facilities that have been struck recently have found that the thieves come at night and steal the copper mostly from air conditioning systems. They have also stolen copper from electrical systems, copper gutter systems and from contractors building new Diocesan facilities.

AJGRMS advises that steps should be taken before this happens to you. At one Parish, thieves actually cut through a six-foot-high fence and stole the copper from four air conditioner systems and the underground copper piping! The Priest had an upcoming event and called an air conditioning contractor to fix the units. The contractor replaced the copper condensers and some of the piping the

very same day. Since this was a two-day job the thieves came back that night and stole all the new copper that was replaced!

So how can we stop this from happening? Other than hiring a security guard 24/7, we have found that there are several ways to deter thieves from targeting your church or other Diocesan facilities.

Install Lighting

Thieves don't like to be seen in the act. You can install motion sensing flood lights that will detect the would-be thieves and flood them with light. However, if you're A/C units are located in an isolated part of the property this may not be the best option.

Fencing or Caging

You can place fencing around the units with a fenced top. In addition to motion sensing flood lights. Again, if your units are in an isolated area, this may not deter the aggressive thieves. They come equipped with tools, and bolt cutters can easily cut through fencing.

There are manufactures that make and sell heavy duty cages designed for this purpose that are almost full-proof. However, these can be costly depending on the number or size of the A/C units you are trying to protect.

Surveillance Cameras

Surveillance cameras could deter would-be thieves if properly installed—not to be reachable by thieves who can disable cameras. Video cameras alone are not considered as an active security system since they just record the theft. Cameras with integrated motion



detectors and notification capabilities, (signal an alarm or a notification) would be a better system, but could be cost prohibitive.

Alarm Systems

There are relatively inexpensive alarm systems that can be installed that will detect tampering and sound a loud local alarm and/or be tied into your existing burglar alarm system.

Steps you take now to protect your valued copper containing equipment will be much more cost effective than replacing the whole system(s). Don't be a victim of copper theft. Act now!

Please feel free to contact Arthur J. Gallagher Loss Control at 800.239.8454 for assistance or further information.

Helpful links:

www.copperwatch.net
www.copperguard.com
<http://www.protectionbureau.coppertheft.info/>
<http://acarmor.net>
<http://allstaracarmor.com/>