

# N.B. scrap metal dealers will be taught to spot the dot

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NB Power and the RCMP announced a new strategy this week to fight copper theft in the province.

Copper wires will now be sprayed with tiny dots, invisible to the naked eye, that contain specific ID codes.

NB Power spokeswoman Heather MacLean says scrap metal dealers can be trained to spot the dots.

"We definitely want to make sure that our copper is marked and easily identifiable under the right conditions," MacLean said. "Once it's marked it becomes obvious as to where the copper has come from, so we're hoping that this will be a deterrent."

RCMP Sgt. Derek Strong says the theft of copper wire in the province has become an epidemic, and something has to be done to deter thieves who are threatening public safety by stealing from power substations.

"From a police perspective this is very dangerous because it can and has affected the 911 system in the province," Strong said. "Essentially if the wrong region of power goes out there will be no 911 service for that region, and that's not a situation that we can live with."

Data Dot Canada is the company working with NB Power and the RCMP.

President Pat Cowman says the data dot technology has worked for other power utilities in Canada, including British Columbia's.

Cowman says it's nearly impossible for thieves to remove the data dots since thousands are sprayed onto items, and police only need one to trace it.

He says in some places thefts have been reduced by as much as 80 per cent.