

PSE reports drop in copper thefts from substations

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BELLEVUE – Officials with Puget Sound Energy say the extra steps they have taken to combat copper theft have resulted in a 28 percent reduction in copper thefts from substations in the nine counties the utility serves.

Sue McLain, Senior Vice President of Operations, says copper's conductive properties make it especially useful in the electrical system, but unfortunately, it's also a hot commodity.

Since 2005, copper thefts have cost PSE nearly \$500,000, mostly from damage to substations and equipment. A theft of \$50 to \$100 in copper can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in electrical system damage.

PSE has adopted some new technologies to battle theft. They include:

- Replacing chain-link fencing around substations with extruded steel fencing that cannot be cut

- Applying "data dots," spray-on microscopic labels, to copper wire for identification by recycling centers and law enforcement agencies.

- Replacing copper with new materials such as copper-weld, a steel line coated in copper, which has virtually no recycle value.

"We have been making improvements in material, technology and partnership deterrents to reduce theft in substations," said McLain. "With the extra eyes watching our infrastructure we can call local law enforcement to the scene during the crime – not