



# PREVENTING COPPER THEFT AT YOUR CHURCH

*More and more people are finding their property rummaged for copper. Why? This valuable metal is being sold as scrap for big money. A wide assortment of building materials contain copper, including heating and air conditioning units, plumbing, gutters, electrical components, and more. The cost has increased from less than \$1 per pound to over \$4 per pound.*

Theft of copper pipes, tubing, and wiring has been on the rise in recent years due to the increased value for scrap copper. The US Department of Energy estimates that this once minor problem has exploded into \$1 billion a year nightmare. Construction sites, abandoned buildings, and commercial heating and air conditioning units have been the biggest targets. More often than not the damage caused obtaining the copper vastly exceeds the value of the copper, but this does not deter the thieves. There have been numerous reports of air conditioners, valued at over \$3,000, completely destroyed for no more than \$25 worth of copper.

Not only are business stuck having to repair or replace equipment stripped of copper, the damage often results in the loss of electricity, water, and heating or air conditioning resulting in the discontinuing of business until the repairs are completed. Here are tips you can use to protect your church from being a victim of copper theft.

- Install motion sensitive lights - thieves generally don't like to be in the spotlight.
- Keep all landscaping away from air conditioning units and other copper sources – do not provide a thief with a hiding place. Keep them out in the open!
- Upgrade your security system to include motion sensitive cameras. Sure, it costs a few dollars, but how much is your insurance deductible? If cameras prevent theft they will pay for themselves
- Audible alarms are available for your air conditioning units – an audible alarm will sound if a line is cut resulting in a loss of refrigerant pressure. They can be as reasonable as \$200. A similar alarm is available that activates a siren when an attempt is made to move an outside AC unit.
- Paint or tin your copper – painted and tinned copper is almost useless to recycling facilities and the people stealing it know that!
- Engrave your copper – your name and address will surely let recyclers know it was stolen. Additionally, if you are able, a nice engraving that reads: "STOLEN! DO NOT RECYCLE!" might have thieves thinking twice about that particular piece of copper.
- Protect your air conditioning units with theft deterrent cages and tamper resistant screws. A cage that fits snug around your air conditioning unit will keep thieves away. And for less than \$100 you can replace all the screws on your air conditioning unit with tamper resistant ones. Both devices require a special key that only you will have, and not the thieves.