

Copper Theft Prevention

What You Need to Know to Protect Your Business



With the value of copper and other scrap materials increasing, so has the theft of copper and other materials from businesses and building owners. Not only do you need to worry about the theft of stock, but also of the copper already installed. Whether it's from your HVAC units, plumbing within your building, or your copper roof, there are many potential targets for would-be thieves.

Theft Prevention

This increase in theft occurs periodically when the price of scrap metal increases. However, there are measures you can take to help protect your business or property from being a target. The following is just a sample of an overall Loss Prevention Plan for your location that can be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by Montgomery Insurance™. For additional information or assistance, please contact your independent agent or Montgomery Insurance Loss Prevention Specialist.

Perimeter/Access Control

Physical control of your property is an effective means of preventing criminal acts (*theft and violence*). When the perimeter is secured or access to the property is restricted, this could be enough of a deterrent to convince potential thieves to move on. Additionally, good perimeter/access control measures tend to foil attempted criminal acts. Your planning for perimeter control systems should include frequent inspections for effectiveness, gaps in coverage, as well as reviewing existing practices adopted for employee convenience. For example, open doors for smokers or employees on lunch break will effectively negate an otherwise good perimeter control system.

Locks/Fences/Lighting

Door locks, quality fencing and gates, and well-lit areas remain the most effective perimeter controls, both for cost effectiveness as well as security control. The simplicity of these systems allows good coverage and minimal maintenance. Increasing the lighting around the HVAC unit is another way to help reduce the chance of theft. Adding lights with motion detectors can help to deter theft. Conduct frequent inspections to catch breaches in your system. Check for damaged or breached perimeter fencing and broken

gates. Prohibit the propping open of exterior doorways at all times. Replace exterior lights immediately when they burn out. If unattended, any of these can indicate lax security and invite a security breach.

Visual Barriers/Façades

These barriers should be placed around equipment, both on the ground and on the roof. The purpose is to shield from view valuable assets and mechanical equipment that pose an interest to a criminal.

Roof Access

Remove all exterior fixed ladders and stairs (*with the exception of fire escapes or other emergency exits*) that lead directly to the roof. Properly store all portable ladders inside the building. Do not provide easy access for unwanted visitors to your building.

Cameras and Electronic Monitoring

As a crime deterrent, ensure that a person is assigned to observe monitors installed on a property. When persons are assigned to observe monitors, ensure that they are trained and written procedures are in place to be followed. Consult a qualified and bonded security alarm contractor for help with locating cameras, motion and floor pressure sensors and door and window alarm contacts.

Key Cards/Electronic Entry Systems

Continually evaluate the effectiveness of this control method to ensure that employees are not "tailgating" each other upon entry (*by following another employee in on one card swipe*). This is critical. Tolerating this practice encourages additional similar acts and negates the goal of access security. Instruct all employees to politely explain your written policy to employees or visitors who desire entry. Assign each employee an access/ID card and replace lost, destroyed, or stolen cards immediately. Also, render prior cards unusable.

Sensitive/Critical Points

Provide special attention to specific locations and operations in each facility for additional or exceptional protection when planning your perimeter/access control. Areas for consideration may include exterior propane storage tanks, HAZMAT storage, electrical service, sprinkler shut off valves, HVAC intake vents, communication rooms, and computer server rooms.

Zone and Compartmentalized Control

Some businesses require that access control be zoned to allow for different activities at one location. Where needed, ensure that only those with approved access to a specific area are allowed entry. Make sure that all entryways into these areas are properly monitored by security or electronic surveillance equipment. Be mindful that former employees may have intimate knowledge of the facility or where access might allow an unsecured entry. Where internal employees are compartmentalized into specific areas of a workplace, clear training, well-disciplined escorting, and signs indicating the different areas should be basic requirements for your business.

Unit Specific Protection

There are a number of steps you can take to safeguard HVAC equipment located outside the building:

- Enclose HVAC equipment in secured, locked, metal cages.
- Anchor the outdoor units to concrete pads.
- Secure power shut-offs to HVAC equipment or move them inside.
- It may be possible to install a pressure switch to the coolant line to your HVAC system and tie this into your existing security system. When thieves cut the line, the alarm will sound.
- Alarms are also made that can be attached to the unit itself. These alarms activate if the system is tampered with in any way.
- For larger HVAC units, consider installing tamper proof screws on covers.
- Use ultraviolet invisible ink to mark the copper in your HVAC unit with your name or other information. Metal detectors can read the information with black lights.

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For assistance from a program specialist, call our toll-free number at: 800-334-0078
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