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Victorian Electricity Supply Industry Tackles Copper Theft

The Energy Networks Association is concerned about the prevalence of copper theft and in particular theft of items such as copper cable, copper strap and copper busbar.

Also of concern to ENA is the impact of copper theft on the supply of reliable energy to the community and business as well as the safety of the general public.

The value of stolen copper and the cost of replacing stolen copper is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for some distribution businesses.

Alinta has tackled the issue in Victoria by introducing the DataDot DNA identification system that allows every piece of copper to be identifiable back to the lawful owner.

Using the DataDot DNA identification system, thousands of microchips encoded with the company's name and identification number are sprayed throughout the length of copper cable or busbar, indicating lawful ownership. DataDots are not visible to the naked eye.

Identifiers are applied with specially designed durable, weatherproof and non-corrosive adhesive detectable through the ultraviolet trace contained in the adhesive. DataDot DNA marked copper can be easily identified using an Ultra-Violet or black-light torch or pen available from most electronics retailers for \$15.

As a deterrent Alinta has posted warning signs around the perimeter fence of each location outlining that the copper cable has been identified and is traceable by law enforcement officers.

In particular, Alinta has upgraded depot security perimeter fencing, lighting and CCTV. Other specific DataDot applications at Alinta include:

- All metals in Zone substations.

- All equipment in depots.

- All employees' personal tools.

- All vehicles.

- All depots and zone substations will have new warning signs installed advising that all materials are now marked.

ENA members in Victoria and NSW are also rolling out the system.