

Thieves target copper from construction sites, utility poles

Last Updated: Tuesday, January 22, 2008 | 12:25 PM MT

[CBC News](#)

Spurred on by skyrocketing price of copper, some thieves in the Edmonton area have been targeting construction sites where the metal is used, police say.

The key component in electrical wire and water pipes, copper has more than tripled in price in the past five years and RCMP say the theft of heavy metals in the Nisku area south of Edmonton is an ongoing problem.



Someone attempting to steal copper power wires in the Edmonton area used a meat cleaver to try to cut energized wire from a pole.
(EPCOR)

PCL construction vice-president Gary Trigg told CBC on Monday that a recent theft caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage to a construction site in Nisku, all for a few thousand dollars worth of copper.

"People got on site and cut some copper cable, 42 different pieces of copper cable," Trigg said. "It's a big problem for us."

And it's not just contractors who have the problem. Epcor, the electrical utility serving the Edmonton area has also been hit by thieves — who sometimes put themselves at great risk in the process.

"We had a case a couple of months ago where someone took a meat cleaver and tried to hack an energized line off of a power pole," said Ross Johnson, manager of corporate security for Epcor, the electrical utility serving the Edmonton area.

"He ended up burning a big chunk of the metal cleaver off and he escaped. There is a pretty good chance he was injured. He damaged the pole, didn't get anything and came very close to killing himself."

Johnson says the utility is now marking its copper wires in case they are stolen.

The skyrocketing price of copper has been prompting a rash of thefts across the country. Electrical utilities in Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have all reported having copper cables stolen.