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LITHGOW MERCURY

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Integral's copper theft concerns

As part of a new public campaign, Integral Energy is urging anyone with information about copper theft from substations, power lines and power poles in the Lithgow area to report it anonymously to CrimeStoppers on 1800 333 000.

Integral Energy has joined forces with CrimeStoppers and other utilities to call for public support to report copper theft and other vandalism of important community infrastructure, Integral Energy's Chief Financial Officer, Daniel Lucas, said.

"Interfering with substations and other parts of our electricity network can cause disruptions to our services, and copper theft alone costs Integral Energy more than \$200,000 a year to replace or repair," Mr Lucas, who is responsible for the corporation's security program, said.

"The 'Copper theft — don't cop it!' campaign is aimed at stopping people interfering with public utilities, which is illegal and dangerous.

"Thieves and vandals on our sites risk serious injury or electrocution and also put the community at risk.

"The price of stolen copper isn't worth dying for.

"It's important members of the public report suspected copper theft and other vandalism of our power network to the police," he said.

In 2006, Integral Energy became one of the first utilities to use

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permanent DNA tracing technology on its copper wire, which enables the police to trace the copper.

"We're continually upgrading our security measures to ensure the safety of the public and the security of power supplies," Mr Lucas said.

"We're now placing signage on our substation fences to highlight our work with Crime Stoppers and our use of DataDot DNA technology to protect our assets," he said.

Integral Energy has also released a confronting print advertisement with the headline "Dead end" which warns the public not to put their safety on the line by interfering with electricity substations.

The NSW Utilities Copper Theft Security Committee behind the Copper theft — don't cop it! campaign includes Integral Energy, State Rail, EnergyAustralia, Country Energy, Telstra, Sydney Water and the metal recycling industry via the Waste Management Association of Australia.

According to Crime Stoppers, more than \$100,000 worth of stolen copper is being traded in NSW each month, turning some scrap metal dealers into unwitting criminals.

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