

BULLETIN

Risk Control

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Preventing Metal Theft

Vandalism and theft at water district facilities is on the rise. The rising price of recyclable metals and the easy target remote sites present to vandals, fuels this increase. The theft of recyclable metals increases whenever the economy downturns and scrap metal prices rise.

Scrap copper can sell for more than \$3 a pound. It has become an attractive target for thieves and methamphetamine addicts who sell the stolen pipe and wire for quick cash. Dishonest salvage yards often accept copper and brass without question, often paying up to 90% of market price. Thieves look for recyclable metal in many forms and places:

- ✚ Fire hydrants, blow-off valves, meters, and piping from water utilities.
- ✚ New piping and wiring awaiting installation, especially when stored at construction sites.
- ✚ Wiring, piping, and electrical components at remote sites. These sites are often poorly guarded or lit.
- ✚ Gutters, downspouts, lightning conductors, and other roof components from buildings.
- ✚ Copper coils in air conditioners and HVAC units.
- ✚ Outdoor sculptures or decorative architectural components.

Metal theft creates a great deal of inconvenience for utilities and the public. Interruptions can include the loss of water, electrical, or telephone service. There are several new State laws on the sale of recyclable metals. These new laws eliminate most on-the-spot cash transactions at scrap metal dealers. Dealers, in some cases, now have to mail the payment to a physical address and keep a picture of the seller, a picture of the materials, a photocopy of the seller's ID, and the seller's fingerprints. Districts should continue to lobby for and support these increased laws. To review several of the new laws, go to:

www.acwajpia.com/filecabinet/rmnpw/metaltheft081003.pdf.

Take proactive steps to protect your facilities:

- ✚ Meet with local law enforcement to familiarize them with your sites, materials, risks, and

schedules. Seek their advice on local risks and problem areas.

- ✚ Talk with employees about theft. Train them on the proper security procedures to protect facilities, materials, and equipment from theft and vandalism.
- ✚ Get to know your neighbors and vendors. Ask them to alert you and the police if they see suspicious activities or people on your sites, especially after hours.
- ✚ If you purchase large quantities of valuable materials, be sure to have secure storage. Use sturdy, lockable buildings, storage containers, or wire cages.
- ✚ Develop and use an inventory system to identify, measure, and track materials. Mark materials and equipment as your property. Keep an up-to-date inventory of materials and record serial numbers of equipment.
- ✚ Provide exterior lighting and security cameras, especially in high-risk areas. Check these regularly to ensure they are always in working order.
- ✚ Clearly define your property lines with fencing, and post "No Trespassing" signs. Keep gates closed and locked. This makes it easier for police to identify and arrest trespassers.
- ✚ If necessary, assign personnel or hire an outside security company to patrol your facilities after hours. Schedule rounds at irregular intervals so thieves cannot anticipate patrol times.
- ✚ Choose the highest quality of fences, storage containers, and locks to secure your facilities, and maintain them properly.
- ✚ Install locking cages over equipment and other remotes devices. Install locks on exterior electrical panels.
- ✚ See www.guardshackenclosures.com or www.allspecenclosures.com for some manufacturers of these items.
- ✚ Secure or remove exterior fixed ladders, stairs, and other means of access for thieves. Store portable ladders and tools that thieves might use off-site or inside locked buildings.
- ✚ Allow only authorized personnel on site. Train employees to escort all visitors and outside contractors.

Reward Program – What One District is doing...

The Lakeside Water District has initiated a reward program to reduce water losses, material theft, and minimize damage to facilities. Tipsters can receive between \$50 and \$250 if thieves are successfully arrested and prosecuted. If a customer observes an illegal activity, they are instructed to call the district office or law enforcement immediately. Whenever possible, a license plate number, description of individuals, or photograph should be obtained. Regular reminders about the reward program are sent out with customer billings.

Cal-OSHA Recognition Received by Moulton Niguel Water District

On September 3, 2008, Cal-OSHA presented a Golden Gate Partnership Recognition certificate to Moulton Niguel Water District (MNWD). Bob Gumerman, general manager, accepted the award on behalf of all MNWD employees from Herman Jett, Cal-OSHA area manager, Santa Fe Springs; and Steven Seligman, Cal-OSHA industrial hygiene consultant, Santa Fe Springs.



Herman Jett, Cal-OSHA Area Manager (left)
Bob Gumerman, General Manager, MNWD (right)

MNWD partnered with Cal-OSHA Consultation Services about a year earlier when Todd Novacek was promoted to safety and regulatory compliance supervisor. After his initial review of existing programs and employee training, Todd wanted to confirm that current District practices and policies complied with Cal-OSHA standards.

Working with Cal-OSHA Consultation, several programs were revised and updated. Recordkeeping and training programs were improved. During the process, any non-compliance items found were not subject to Cal-OSHA citations or penalties. The Consultation Service cannot notify Cal-OSHA Enforcement unless an employer fails to take action to correct serious hazards. The proactive efforts taken by MNWD resulted in the Golden Gate Partnership Recognition.

Golden Gate Recognition is site-specific. It is an entry-level program for high-hazard employers. Employers must have a written injury and illness prevention program, and be able to demonstrate accurate recordkeeping and employee training. Districts are eligible to receive a letter of commendation if they

request and receive a Cal-OSHA Consultation visit, and meet the qualifications for Golden Gate Recognition. Additional information about all Cal-OSHA Recognition and Consultation Services can be obtained at www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/cal_vpp/vpp_index.html or from your JPIA risk management consultant.

Thanksgiving Facts

- 🍂 The first Thanksgiving lasted more than one day. It was a continuous harvest and celebration held between September and November 1621, in Massachusetts, by 50 Plymouth Pilgrims and 90 Wampanoag Indians.
- 🍂 Thanksgiving was not an official holiday until President Roosevelt signed a bill on November 26, 1941, that established the fourth Thursday in November as the national holiday.
- 🍂 In the US, about 280 million turkeys are sold for holiday celebrations.
- 🍂 Ben Franklin proposed the turkey as the official United States bird.
- 🍂 Since 1947, the National Turkey Federation has presented a live turkey to the President. The President does not eat the live turkey. The turkey is granted a "pardon" and is allowed to live out its days on a farm.
- 🍂 Wild turkeys cannot fly, but can run up to 20 miles per hour.
- 🍂 Fifty percent of us eat turkey at least once per week. After the Thanksgivings Day feast, the five most popular ways to serve turkey is as a sandwich, in stew, chili or soup, casseroles and a burger.
- 🍂 Tryptophan is a natural sedative. It is found in turkey meat. Tryptophan may cause the sleepiness many experience after a Thanksgiving feast.

From the Risk Management Department and all of the JPIA, have a fun and safe Thanksgiving holiday.



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