

## Hydro lost millions from theft, damage last year

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Thieves raiding B.C. Hydro installations last year — three of whom died while one was badly injured — cost the crown corporation millions of dollars in stolen property and damage, a Hydro official said today.

Now Hydro is fighting back and implementing a wide range of deterrent measures to deter thefts of copper wire and equipment including spraying the items favoured by thieves with microdots so items can be traced, said Elisha Moreno.

"There's a product out there called Datadot which are microscopic dots that contain a logo or an ID number and these dots can be sprayed on to equipment. They can be viewed through a microscope which will enable us to identify any material that has been stolen from us if it is recovered," she said.

The spraying program will begin within a few months as Hydro starts target-hardening its 260 sub-stations and 16,000 junction boxes throughout the province, said Moreno.

Copper scrap is selling for \$3.20 cents a pound and this is driving the rash of thefts which police believe are mostly being done by drug addicts.

Pure copper wire might become a thing of the past as the utility has begun using copper weld — a mixture of copper and steel which is just as conductive but worth only pennies a pound and not worth stealing.

"They (thieves) seem to know this because we've heard that some of them are carrying magnets now to check which is which," she said.

Hydro installations in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island are being hit the hardest and anti-theft measures will be directed to these trouble spots first.

Better fencing and video surveillance cameras are being mounted in the sub-stations and the locks are being changed on junction boxes after investigators looking into a fatality in Langley found thieves had come up with a way to break the locks.

"This person had beat a socket wrench onto the bolt (locking the junction box) and then managed to turn the bolt and open the box," she said.

The thief then crawled inside the two-metre-long by one-metre-wide junction box and tried to remove copper wire when he was electrocuted.

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