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BUSINESS NEWS

Last updated at 11:59 PM on 25/06/07

NSP will try to put halt to copper thefts

Rising price of metal spurring on thieves

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BY WES STEWART
The Cape Breton Post

By Wes Stewart

Cape Breton Post

SYDNEY — Nova Scotia Power has come up with a plan to discourage the theft of copper from its 300 substations.

Spokesperson Margaret Murphy said with the price of copper increasing by four times in recent years, thieves are placing themselves and others in life-threatening situations.

It's a huge problem, she said, noting "we had six break-ins into substations in Cape Breton in 2006 that caused outages for over an hour and a half, affecting more than 1,000 customers.

"When they do this they take out the whole substation, all the customer served by the substation lose power."

The utility will be using microdot technology to mark and identify equipment at substations and other electrical facilities in the province.

"The microdot that we will use comes in a spray can and there are much larger applications including large volume dispensed under pressure used to reach large infrastructure wire high off the ground," she said.

It's largely invisible and once applied it won't come off and is easily detectable by police, NSP staff or anyone doing surveillance.

The technology, called DataDot, makes it easier to trace copper wire back to its owner.











"Even if it is mixed in with other wire, it will be able to be identified," she said.

Crime Stoppers will also be part of the new anti-theft campaign.

NSP officials say copper thieves are putting their lives in danger, along with those of the technicians who have to repair the damage.



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"We are worried our technicians will walk into a substation and find a body, a very real possibility that has already happened in New Brunswick. Someone who was trying to steal copper wire was electrocuted," Murphy said.

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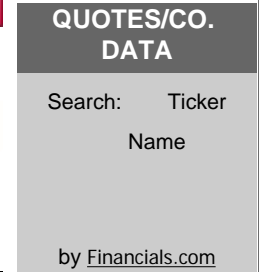
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