



FACT SHEET

Copper theft from Canada's Electricity Infrastructure: Dangerous, Expensive and a Threat to Reliability

Electricity

- As a stand-alone sector, electricity contributed \$30.5 billion to Canada's GDP in 2012.
- Canada's electricity sector provided over 108,000 jobs across the country in 2010.
- Electricity also added \$1.7 billion to our trade balance with the United States in 2012.
- According to the Conference Board of Canada, the electricity sector needs to invest \$347 billion over the next twenty years. This investment will bring an additional \$1.9 billion per year in revenues to governments across the country through to 2030.
- As Canada's electricity sector enters this transformative period, how we protect Canada's grid must also evolve to meet new and growing threats.

Copper's Role in Electricity

- Copper is a ductile and malleable metallic element that conducts heat and electricity which is widely used for electrical wiring, water piping, and corrosion-resistant parts.
- Copper is the preferred electrical conductor in almost all categories of electrical wiring and is used extensively in power generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure.

The Price of Copper

- Over the past 10 years, the value of copper in Canada has increased 209 per cent.
- In fact, copper cost around 80 cents per pound years ago and currently costs \$3.55 (USD).
- As the price of copper increased, so have copper thefts from electricity infrastructure.

Copper Theft from Canada's Electricity Infrastructure





Dangerous

- Copper theft not only puts the lives of the thieves at risk but also the safety of emergency first responders, utility workers, and local residents.
- Media have reported eight deaths from copper theft since 2010 and multiple injuries.
- Many who go to steal copper in an effort to make quick cash do not realize that the voltage of electricity in transmission towers, poles, and substations is over 6,000 times higher than the electricity entering their homes. The consequences can quite easily be fatal.

Expensive

- With hundreds of copper thefts occurring at utility sites across the country every year, copper theft is costly to the electricity sector. In fact, CEA members across the country estimate that copper theft costs the Canadian electricity sector approximately \$40 million each and every year.
- Other sectors are affected by the costs of copper theft as well. TELUS estimated that theft of copper wire in 2011 cost the company \$20 million in Alberta and British Columbia alone.
- In the United States, the Department of Energy recently estimated that copper theft costs U.S. businesses nearly \$1 billion (USD) in losses annually.
- Like all consumer-based sectors, these significant costs are passed on to Canadians through higher utility bills.

A Threat to Reliability

- While the dangers and costs of copper theft are significant, the impacts of copper theft on system reliability have the potential to have the greatest impact.
- Power outages affect families, jeopardize critical infrastructure like emergency care in hospitals and cause disruptions to vital service and result in lower productivity and losses for businesses.

About CEA

Canadian Electricity Association (CEA) members generate, transmit and distribute electrical energy to industrial, commercial, residential and institutional customers across Canada every day. From vertically integrated electric utilities, independent power producers, transmission and distribution companies, to power marketers, to the manufacturers and suppliers of materials, technology and services that keep the industry running smoothly -- all are represented by this national industry association.

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For additional information:





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Association

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de l'électricité

Samara Wiseman
Senior Advisor, Public Affairs
Tel.: 613 688 2954
Cell: 613 355 4022
Email: wiseman@electricity.ca

For more information, please visit: www.electricity.ca
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