

# Scrap Theft Bulletin

Provided by the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries

**BOLO News- March/April 2017**

## **Stolen Materials on ScrapTheftAlert.com**

Registered users of [ScrapTheftAlert.com](http://ScrapTheftAlert.com) (STA) need only review the *Latest Theft Alerts* on the home page to know copper, in one form or another, is the most common item reported as stolen on broadcasted alerts. Though alerts are categorized by the specific metal that was stolen such as copper, bronze, or aluminum, thefts are also listed by the specific items stolen. A thorough description of items assists recyclers in identifying stolen materials. For example, it is important for a user of STA to not only report a certain length of 4/0 copper cable was stolen, but to also provide a complete description of the sheathing or insulation. However, even a complete description does not guarantee success.

Items listed as stolen on STA range from the non-descript copper wire or pipe to specific items such as propane tanks, lightning rods, down spouts, cast iron bells, batteries, tools, boat motors, ladders, bleachers, and even statues. This begs the question: Why can't recyclers identify these specific items as stolen material? There are a few answers to this question, but perhaps the most common is not knowing if these items ever make it to a recycling yard. Propane tanks, batteries, ladders, motors, and tools can be re-purposed or sold as is by thieves. However, even those items that do make it to a scrap yard may not be identifiable as stolen to the recycler.

Hundreds of feet of copper wire or 20' lengths of copper pipe can be cut into shorter segments and taken to multiple yards and sold as scrap. (Although, the Success Story below illustrates this is not a sure bet for thieves.) Copper down spout in extended lengths can be cut into much shorter pieces to make them appear as leftover scrap from a job. Even bells and statues can be cut or disfigured to such an extent as to make them unrecognizable.

This is not meant to excuse recyclers from their due diligence in determining the rightful ownership of materials brought into their yards. Nor is it meant to discourage STA users from broadcasting stolen materials. The more information provided on an alert the better chance of recovery. Photos of stolen material or of similar items also increase the likelihood of recovery. STA is an excellent tool for law enforcement and victims of crime and when used properly, can not only help in the recovery of stolen material but also assist law enforcement in arresting thieves.

## **ScrapTheftAlert.com Success Story**

On February 15, 2017, the Woodbury (MN) Police Department broadcast an alert for the theft of approximately \$25,000 in clean copper pipe. The pipe was in multiple diameters from ¾" to 4" and most pieces were 20' in length. Assisted by a local recycler who responded to the alert, police were able to identify multiple suspects after they made several attempts to sell the stolen pipe. In this case, the suspects cut the 20' lengths into 4' sections believing they could pass the stolen material.

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## **Law Enforcement Outreach**

On April 6 and 7, ISRI will exhibit at the Oklahoma Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association annual conference being held at the Reed Center in Midwest City, OK. Stop by the ISRI booth for information on [ScrapTheftAlert.com](http://ScrapTheftAlert.com) and other resources ISRI provides to law enforcement in the fight against metals theft.