



Whilst the price of metal has fallen from the highs of 2011/12, criminal activity associated with metals, particularly metal theft is still a significant issue. The knock-on effect of such criminal activity on UK industry is alarming. Thefts of materials ranging from electricity cables to metal from railway lines, war memorials, road signs, children’s playground equipment and church roofs are costing the country as much as 770 million a year, said the Local Government Association (LGA)*. Insurers are paying out more than £1 million a week to victims of metal theft according to the Association of British Insurers.

For the Construction industry, metal theft is a significant issue with construction sites often being poorly secured and so open and accessible to thieves.

Best practice for site security to prevent metal theft

✓	Liaise with a Crime Prevention Officer. Sharing information between police, construction and scrap metal industries is key. Communicate through a central website or telephone hotline.
✓	Establish a main site office at the main entrance for recording all visitors and restricting entry points to a minimum.
✓	Consider an electronic control system and/or 3 proofs of ID (including photo ID) from all visitors, workers, delivery drivers and contractors upon arrival and departure.
✓	Install substantial perimeter fencing and gates that are well maintained and monitored. Small inner site areas can also be fenced off as a further deterrent. Check for weak spots: trees and bushes growing against the fence or wheelie bins near fences.
✓	Consider anti-climb paint and security signage attached to fencing to warn of security measures.
✓	All buildings and storage facilities should be locked at night with double cylinder dead bolts and padlocks with padlock shields. Monitored security alarms add a further layer of security for highly valuable items. Overseas shipping containers provide a very robust storage option.
✓	Lighting can deter intruders and aid surveillance, whether fully lit or detector activated.
✓	Provide security guards for sites under constant threat.
✓	Digital CCTV and video-over-IP protocols use cameras and detectors linked to Remote Video Response Centres, linked to the police for event driven monitoring.
✓	Effective theft prevention is based on Contractors prioritising and enforcing security. Clear communication on theft prevention policies to all workers is essential.
✓	Reinforce the anti theft policy. Promote accountability and provide training for supervisors and team leaders. Personal photo ID badges should be carried by all workers.
✓	Nominate key holders for designated storage facilities. Keys should be stamped 'Do Not Duplicate'.
✓	Write security procedures into sub contractors' agreements. Extended working hours pose a risk to site security as deadlines loom. Site-specific security plans should be a specific person's responsibility to devise and implement.
✓	Financial incentives may be a useful tool to encourage workers' cooperation.
✓	Thieves cannot steal what is not there. Reduce metal stocks held on site by minimising the time between delivery to site and their usage.
✓	Conceal metal supplies and mark them using SmartWater, Selecta DNA paints or similar products.

*Source: Cllr Ann Lucas OBE, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board.



Guidance and Useful information

Following the introduction of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, which came into force 1 October 2013, it is reported that metal thefts have reduced by a third from 59,788 in 2012/13 to 40,680 in 2013/14. The Act clamps down on rogue traders and gives local authorities and police powers to inspect premises where they suspect illegal activity. All scrap metal dealers have to apply to their local council for a licence to operate. It is also now illegal for anyone to buy or sell scrap metal with cash while traders have to keep records of names and addresses of scrap metal suppliers. This is increasing traceability for all transactions and making it more difficult for thieves to sell stolen metal to scrapyards. Magistrates can issue fines of up to £5,000 to any scrap metal dealer operating without a licence.

- The latest metal theft crime statistics, from the Office of National Statistics, can be found here:
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_386943.pdf
- British Safety Industry Association - metal theft report can be downloaded from
www.bsia.co.uk/Portals/4/Publications/156_metal_theft_guide.pdf

Further information

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