

Copper theft from utility poles on the rise in Montgomery County.

Topeka, Kan., June 28, 2013 — Thieves are stealing copper from transmission utility poles in Montgomery County – crimes that could endanger both the criminals and the public. Westar is asking for the public’s help in stopping metal thefts by remaining vigilant and reporting suspicious activity to local law enforcement.

“Stealing copper from energized equipment is a dangerous game of roulette. Serious injuries and death are a real possibility,” said Mike Willis, manager, operations. “Even if the thieves escape uninjured, our employees and the public could be put in harm’s way if they encounter equipment that is no longer grounded.”

Contacting energized equipment, including power lines, is dangerous. Earlier this month a man was electrocuted in Wichita. Authorities believe he was allegedly trying to steal copper from a power line.

Thieves receive relatively little money for the stolen copper but can cause hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. These crimes also often result in power outages that can be a costly inconvenience to customers. Westar is taking steps to prevent copper thefts, including using copper weld, a material similar to copper but with no scrap value; installing camera and alarm technology at substations; increasing security patrols; working with law enforcement on public awareness; and reaching out to scrap dealers to help them better identify stolen materials. However, alert neighbors are one of the best ways to protect neighborhoods and electric infrastructure. The public is encouraged to be alert to suspicious activity. Suspicious activity

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could include bicycles leaning up against utility poles or electric substation fences, backpacks or duffel bags in or around substations and near utility poles and people performing work who do not appear to be Westar employees. Westar employees and contractors will wear hard hats and safety glasses. They will also carry company identification. Trucks will have company identification. Suspicious activity should be reported immediately to local law enforcement.

For more information about preventing metal thefts and how to identify suspicious activity, visit www.WestarEnergy.com/copper.

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