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ETSA Utilities lifts reward to catch copper thieves

ETSA Utilities has doubled the reward for information leading to prosecution of copper thieves.

This follows the theft of copper earthing from the Elizabeth Downs substation on Thursday, which triggered power outages affecting about 29,000 customers in northern Adelaide for up to 3½ hours.

Sue Filby, General Manager, Services, said the current reward of \$5,000 would be lifted to up to a maximum of \$10,000 for information leading to apprehension and conviction of those responsible for copper theft from ETSA Utilities electricity infrastructure.

Under the Electricity Act, thieves face up to two year's jail or a \$10,000 fine for breaking in to a substation and interfering with electricity infrastructure.

"We encourage anyone with information on copper theft, including Thursday's incident, to contact police by contacting BankSA CrimeStoppers on 1800 333 000," Ms Filby said.

BankSA CrimeStoppers can also be contacted anonymously online via their website at www.sa.crimestoppers.com.au

"We also would like to encourage local residents who live around substations to keep an eye out for suspicious activity.

"These are community facilities providing an essential community service and we would appreciate the community's help in protecting them as it seems there are some idiots who, despite all the security measures we have in place and the risk of death, will not be deterred."

"These people not only are risking their own lives and those of our crews who have to repair damage, but yesterday's events show how much disruption they can cause for business and residents. The reality is they probably got away with about \$500 worth of copper. It simply is not worth it."

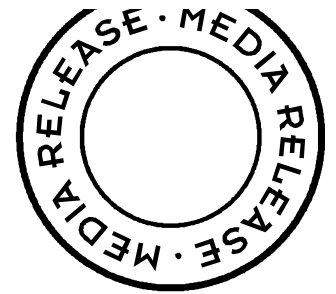
Ms Filby said ETSA Utilities will accelerate its programmed installation of additional security measures at substation facilities in the northern suburbs following the substation break in.

.../2

About ETSA Utilities

ETSA Utilities is South Australia's electricity distributor, delivering energy from the transmission network through poles, wires, substations and transformers to about 800,000 customers. With more than 60 years experience, we are one of South Australia's largest organisations which employs about 1700 people throughout metropolitan and regional South Australia.

ETSA Utilities is 51 percent owned by Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings Limited and Hongkong Electric Holdings, which form part of the Cheung Kong Group of companies. The remaining 49 percent is owned by Spark Infrastructure. Spark Infrastructure began trading on the ASX in December 2005.



- 2 -

“We have a range of strategies in place to try to deter copper theft and will speed up installation of new systems at vulnerable sites,” Ms Filby said.

The improved security measures have halved substation break ins this year.

“Our efforts have been very successful with break ins to substations in 2008 falling from the level of 2006 and 2007 (32 in 2008, 67 in 2007 and 60 in 2006).

“Most of our metro substations – and there are about 150 of them – are on a ten-year program to be upgraded to higher-security fencing costing as much as \$400,000 per site. In addition to physical barriers, we use security patrols; we have security cameras at sites we consider most vulnerable; and we also have installed Datadot technology at all our northern sites as part of a trial of this technology,” Ms Filby said.

“Following yesterday’s event we have initiated additional security patrols for all substations in the northern region and are bringing forward installation of our security camera and alarm system roll out to more northern substations.”

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