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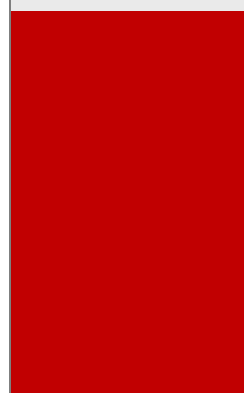
### Keeping copper thieves at bay

Nova Scotia Power Inc. tries new technology to deter criminals

ANDREA MACDONALD  
The Daily News



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An NSP worker applies Datadot to copper wire at a substation in Halifax on Monday. (Daily News/Andre Forget)

Nova Scotia Power Inc. is going high-tech to try deter copper theft.

The utility is using a technology called DataDot to mark and identify its copper wire because of safety concerns over the growing crime.

NSPI says thieves are not only putting their own lives at risk, they're endangering the lives of power-

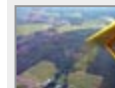
**Nova Scotians drank more wine last year. How much wine do you drink?**

- Not a drop
- Glass or two per week
- About a glass a day
- Couple of bottles per week
- Too much

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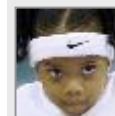
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line technicians making repairs, as well as cops, other first responders and the general public.

So far in 2007, NSPI has had 70 incidents of copper theft, compared with 85 for 2006. Canada has had two fatalities, including one in New Brunswick. That province and several others are already using DataDot, which can also help identify such items as bikes and laptops.

**Tracing copper**

Workers apply a small disk about the size of a grain of sand onto the copper. The disk has an electronic code laser etched onto it, onto the copper. Copper buyers would have to magnify the product to see the code and look it up on the Internet to trace it back to the rightful owner.

Copper theft has become a worldwide problem as the metal's price has skyrocketed. Copper rose from \$1.50 per kilogram in 2003 to more than \$7 per kilogram in 2006-07.

NSPI plans to apply microdots to hundreds of kilometres of copper wire at its roughly 300 substations and electrical facilities.

"We're just trying to let the thieves out there know that we have a method now of determining where that product came from, and from that, you can prosecute," Garry Theriault, manager of transmission maintenance for NSPI, said yesterday.

**Sounds good**

David Giberson, who runs Dartmouth Metals & Bottles Ltd., said the system sounds good, but he's not sure how practical it will be. Microdots are painted onto bare wire, yet much of the copper his shop gets is wrapped in insulation.

Wyatt Redmond, who runs Beaver Enviro-Depot on Herring Cove Road, says most dealers can recognize materials used by the phone and power companies and other large corporations. Problems arise, Redmond said, when thieves take the goods to people new in the industry or they mix it in with other materials. Busy staff can sometimes miss the copper, he said.

"When you're in the industry, you pretty much get used to who's bringing stuff in and who's not. Four young guys in a half-ton truck driving in with a hose and \$6,000 or \$2,000 worth of copper, you know they hopped over a fence."

[amacdonald@hfxnews.ca](mailto:amacdonald@hfxnews.ca)

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**1. michael tompkins from halifax, nova scotia writes:** The problem of copper lies in the fact that the recyclers are in on the deal.

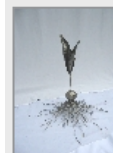
There was an aluminum ramp stolen from the back of a rental cube here in North End Halifax last summer and within one hour it was already cut into cubes for recycling in Burnside. The culprits were on drugs with a stolen vehicle...but these scrap dealers need to be responsible on who they give money for scrap metal. Same as the pawn shop owner pleading that they know nothing....it is disgusting. Scrap owners should have the drivers license for each load of metal.

Posted 27/06/2007 at 1:54 am | [Alert an Editor](#) | [Link to comment](#)

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