

KEEPING YOUR HVAC UNITS SECURE

Thieves often target HVAC systems because they contain large amounts of copper that can be sold as scrap metal. After a theft occurs, an organization may have to wait weeks or even months for repair with replacement parts or a new system to be installed.

THE FACTS:

- Both ground-mounted and roof-mounted HVAC units can be stolen.
- Most thefts occur at night.
- Thieves target large HVAC units because of the large amount of copper, but small units are usually easier targets. It takes less than five minutes for a thief to steal \$20 worth of copper from a small AC unit.
- Copper is 100% recyclable and recyclers pay, on average, 90% of the new copper price for scrap copper. Thus, it is an attractive target for thieves. Other items being targeted include copper wiring, gutters, pipe, and other electrical appliances and products containing copper.
- The majority of thefts occur in what police would describe as low crime areas.



STEPS TO PREVENT THEFT:

- Request your local police department do a security audit of your property.
- Do not hide your HVAC system where it cannot be seen. Thieves prefer to work in secluded areas.
- Add security lighting to the area around your HVAC systems.
- Deny access to roof-mounted units by removing fixed ladders (do not remove fire escapes) and other step-ups including tree branches that may assist thieves. Portable ladders should be kept inside a locked building.
- Consider using steel cages to enclose your AC units. The heavier the gauge of steel, the better. Do not use standard chain link fencing as it can be cut quickly.
- Use security cameras. (Note: In order for them to be fully effective, they must be properly protected, installed, and monitored.)
- Restrict after-hours access to your property by adding fences and gates. Post appropriate “No Trespassing” signs and ask your local law enforcement to assist in enforcing the law on private property.
- Install alarms mounted to your HVAC units. If the unit is tampered with, including cutting of refrigerant and power lines, an alarm will sound. Contact your local security company or HVAC contractor for details.



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